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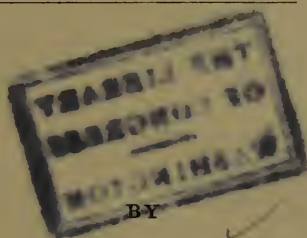
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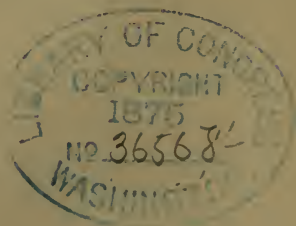


CHRISTIANS, OR DISCIPLES.



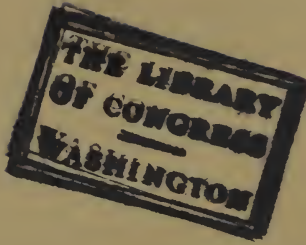
THE REV. S. NOLAND,
OF THE KENTUCKY CONFERENCE.

1834 ✓
WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY THE REV. A. H. REDFORD, D.D.



NASHVILLE, TENN.:
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INTRODUCTION.

THE controversy between the orthodox denominations of Christians and the Church calling themselves Christians, or Disciples, has been more animated in Kentucky than in any other State in the Union. For half a century a war has been waged on the part of the "Disciples" against the "Sects," and carried on with a zeal worthy of the apostolic age of the Church. The advocates of this system—embodying some of the cardinal truths of Christianity, yet replete with errors and false notions on questions of highest moment—demanded that the several denominations of Christians should abandon usages long established and sanctioned by the teachings of the word of God, and give in their adherence to its dogmas. In too many instances sophistry, ridicule, and abuse were the weapons they employed to undermine the faith of those who dissented from their teachings.

Through the press, the pulpit, and in the broad field of theological disputation, the advocates of "the new order of things" have been met and vanquished. In the several denominations of Christians men have appeared, in vindication of the great truths of the Bible, who have met the bitterest sarcasm with the "sure testimony of the word of God."

The champions of the "Reformation," once bold and defiant, no longer occupy an aggressive attitude, but, routed and

defeated on so many battle-fields, are now satisfied to act on the defensive, and to be content if they can only maintain an existence.

In this controversy the Methodist Church in Kentucky has borne a prominent part, and contributed not less, if not more, than any other Church toward arresting an evil which once threatened the life of true Christianity in that grand old Commonwealth.

Among the several books and pamphlets issued from the press, we have seen nothing more timely than the work before us. Mr. NOLAND treats the several phases of the controversy with marked ability, and, at the same time, with the temper of the Christian gentleman and minister.

A copy of this excellent pamphlet should be placed on every center-table in the State. A. H. REDFORD.

Nashville, Tenn., April 9, 1875.

CHRISTIANS, OR DISCIPLES.

A FEW years after the beginning of the present century a body of men, few in number, who were dissatisfied with the doctrines and usages of all Churches then existing, arose to rebuild and unite the Church of Christ. Their work was to be so complete a success that all human phraseology in the use of religious terms should be excluded, and every word supported by a "Thus saith the Lord." The men who appeared to inaugurate this great reformation held all shades and varieties of opinion and belief on theological questions, embracing some truth and much error. The Calvinist and the Arminian, the Trinitarian and the Unitarian, the Socinian and the Arian, the Universalist and the Materialist, were all represented. Such heterogeneous elements made it necessary to have a short creed, to prevent divisions among themselves; and, as one fundamental principle of this new sect was to make war on all Churches for having creeds of any kind, whether true or false, it was necessary that their basis of agreement should be very brief and simple. It must, also, be quite exclusive, and yet latitudinarian—exclusive, so as to mark well their

peculiarities, and latitudinarian, so as to give a show of liberty of opinion not found in other Churches. The sect was not started to "spread scriptural holiness over the land," but to correct what they supposed to be existing errors and evils in doctrine and practice in other Churches, and to destroy sectarianism. In this view its foundation was laid in a few words: 1. There is no Christian baptism without immersion. 2. There is no pardon of past sins without baptism. 3. All other doctrines of Scripture to be held as *opinions*, and not as *articles of faith*.

I. In discussing the subject we proceed, first, to show the evils of allowing all other doctrines besides *immersion and its design* to be held as opinions. We shall also, under this head, notice the practical workings of this loose system of Church-polity, by considering its captious spirit in selecting a name for the Church, its offer of union to other Churches, and its mode of receiving members.

1. We offer proof that we have truly stated the *toleration of opinion* allowed as to all doctrines, except baptism and its design, by this Church. We know that the conclusion legitimately and logically follows the assumption that immersion alone is baptism, and that the remission of sins is not to be expected apart from immersion, and the farther assumption that the Bible without any articles of faith shall be every man's rule according to his own interpretation, and not subject to any ecclesiastical authority. But we prefer to show that these views, opposing all authority in holding doctrines and pre-

ferring to call them opinions, are held by the new Church not from deductions made from their premises, but by their own express declarations.

In Mr. Campbell's "Christianity Restored" (pp. 118, 119) he says: "The belief of *one fact* and submission to *one institution* is all that is required of Heaven to admission into the Church. The *one fact* is expressed in a single proposition, that Jesus the Nazarene is the Messiah. The *one institution* is *baptism* into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Every such person is a disciple, in the fullest sense of the word, the moment he has believed this one fact." Again, Mr. Campbell said, in the Campbell and Rice debate, held in Lexington, Kentucky, in the year 1843: "We receive men of *all denominations* under heaven, of all *sects* and *parties*, who will make the good confession on which Jesus Christ builded his Church." ("Debate," p. 784.) The good confession here stated is the acknowledgment that Jesus is the Messiah.

But *opinions* concerning the doctrines of the Bible, whether true or false, may be held in this Church. In the debate referred to, Mr. Campbell said of his own Church: "We have almost all sorts of doctrine preached by almost all sorts of men." (P. 775.) He said, in his "Christianity Restored" (pp. 122, 123), answering an inquirer who asked if he would receive a Universalist into his Church: "No, not *as a Universalist*. If a man professing Universalist opinions should apply for admission we will receive him if he will consent to use and apply all the Bible

phrases in their plain reference to the future state of men and angels. We will not hearken to those questions which engender strife, nor discuss them at all. If any person say such is his *private opinion*, let him have it as his private opinion, but lay no stress upon it; and if it be a *wrong private opinion*, it will die a natural death much sooner than if you attempt to kill it." The great majority of this Church believe that the Universalist theory is not only false, but dangerously false, yet it is allowed a place in the Church when held as an *opinion*. But *the truth* can have no higher place in this Church than an *opinion*, and one not held by authority. We quote Mr. Campbell again: "But, says one, will you receive a Unitarian? No, nor a *Trinitarian*. How can this be? Systems make Unitarians and Trinitarians; renounce the system, and you renounce its creatures. But the creatures of other systems now exist, and some of them will come in your way; how will you dispose of them? I answer, We will unmake them. Again, I am asked, How will you unmake them? I answer, By laying no *emphasis upon their opinions*." ("Christianity Restored," pp. 122, 123.) Now, if *Unitarianism* be *false*, then *Trinitarianism* is *true*; and Mr. Campbell, we believe, was a Trinitarian. Yet its being *true* does not clothe it with *authority* in this Church, but it is held only as an *individual opinion*, while Unitarianism, which is *false*, can also be held as an *opinion*.

From the foregoing quotations it is proved: 1. That Quakers, Mormons, Shakers, Unitarians, Universalists, Calvinists, and Arminians can enter and

live in this Church if they will only hold their peculiarities as *opinions*, whether true or false, and make the good confession, and be immersed for the remission of sins. While the debate named was progressing, prominent preachers then living in this Church, and we believe present at the debate, held the following views: Aylett Raines stated in writing, five months after he was immersed, that he was a Universalist. ("Mill. Har.," vol. i., p. 390.) The difficulty was settled by the agreement of the Church and Raines that his belief in Universalianism should be held as an *opinion only*. ("Mill. Har.," vol. i., p. 147; "C. and R. Debate," p. 818.) He also stated that the doctrine of total depravity was a libel on human nature. Dr. Fishback believed in the divinity of Christ, and in total depravity. B. W. Stone denied the divinity of Christ and total depravity. ("C. and R. Debate," p. 843.) Dr. Thomas was a Materialist. ("Debate," p. 793.) 2. It is proved that all that is required to be a member of the Church, or a Christian, is to believe *one fact*, that Jesus is the Messiah, and to do *one act*, be immersed. There is neither a question asked nor an examination made as to the *state of the heart*, whether remaining in sin or made clean, or the belief in any other doctrine of the Scriptures.

2. Serious evils will arise from the *toleration of opinions* and the consequent want of authority in doctrine as held by this Church. After an agreement is made that immersion alone is baptism, and the remission of sins takes place only in baptism, then other doctrines claim attention, and other ques-

tions arise that will be heard. Some will be *true* and some *false*. How can they be disposed of? Suppose the question to be, Will the wicked, dying in their sins, be punished after death? Mr. Raines answered, They will not, while nearly all of this new Church believe they will be punished. Mr. Raines's error is allowed to remain with him as an *opinion*, and he is continued in the Church as an able proclaimer of the gospel, while the *truth*, that men will be punished after death for sins committed in this life if they do not repent, is not held by *authority* in the Church as an article of faith, but only by certain persons, who may hold it as an opinion. Again, suppose the question to be, Are all men totally corrupt by nature? B. W. Stone, A. Raines, and the preachers generally in this Church, answer, No. Dr. Fishback, a few others, and the Bible, answer, Yes. What is the consequence of division in this Church on this doctrine? Raines, Stone, and others, all hold their erroneous view as an opinion, and on that account may hold it with impunity; but the *true* doctrine as taught in the Bible, and held by Fishback and a few others, cannot be maintained as an article of religion. The word of the Lord asserts, without one sentence in it contradictory, that the carnal mind is enmity against God, that the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint; but these truths, important as they are in the whole scheme of redemption, can never rise above an *opinion* that may be held or rejected at the will and pleasure of each member and preacher. Again, suppose the question to be, Is our Saviour, Christ,

divine in his nature, and equal to God the Father? Dr. Fishback and, possibly, others answer, Yes, while B. W. Stone, A. Raines, and many others, respond, No. This Church has no power to settle the dispute on any of these questions. They are all essential. See the importance of the question last named. If Jesus be truly divine, as the Father is divine, then no man can worship him in spirit and in truth who regards him as a created being. On the other hand, if Jesus is only the most exalted of created beings, every one is an idolater who worships him, regarding him as equal with God the Father.

The rule as laid down by Mr. Campbell is that an *opinion* which is erroneous may be held by any person if he will not give it *publication*. Who may judge whether it be an error? Suppose the *opinion* is true, such as the depravity of the heart, or the divine nature of Christ, and persons in this Church holding the opposite view shall object to giving publicity to these true opinions, alleging that they are false, and, under the rule prescribed, should contend that they must be held privately—where is there any power in this Church to authorize these *true opinions* to be preached or written? May not the true doctrines of the Bible be suppressed by the same rule precisely as that by which Mr. Campbell suppresses Universalianism?

Is it not certainly true that none of the doctrines of the Bible are allowed to be held as opinions, or to be rejected by men, as they may not or will not believe them? Can there be any right to hold an error as an opinion, or withhold a truth because it

is called an opinion? If we are told the Bible, and not the creed, answers authoritatively all questions, we reply, This shifts the difficulty without removing it. *What does the Bible teach* concerning the question, be it what it may? This is the inquiry. Does it teach that no one shall pray before baptism? Then, let it be the doctrine of the Church that all prayer before baptism is prohibited. No preacher of the new Church has yet been bold enough to take this stand, although in hundreds of discourses the duty to pray before baptism has been denied. Do the Scriptures teach that men should pray everywhere? that they should pray without ceasing? that in the experience of the publican the short prayer offered by him, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," resulted in his justification? and that in the history of Saul of Tarsus, "Behold he prayeth," the prayer received Heaven's approval before he was baptized? Then, let the Church say, with authority, that prayer to God, through Jesus Christ, is the duty of all men, whether sinners or saints.

II. The captious spirit of the Christians, or Disciples, in giving a *name* to the Church, we now notice.

The Christians, or Disciples, are remarkable as contending for positions which are the most *disputed* or the most *frivolous*. When launching out on an ocean of opinions, drawn from the Bible as they allege, many of them are found to be mere quibbles—on which, however, they make capital for their people. A favorite remark of Mr. Campbell was,

“There are great little things, and little great things.” Of this class of subjects the *name* by which Christians should be called, a matter not at all essential in itself, has been so often presented by them to their people that the various *names* by which other Churches are known seem to them sectarian and odious. Their own name has been a source of trouble, and sometimes of difference of opinion, among themselves. *The Christian Church* is the name most generally preferred. Sometimes they call themselves Disciples, occasionally Reformers, but *never* Campbellites—no term being more offensive to them than the latter, although their founder, A. Campbell, who was their leading man, and who was truly a man of letters and ability, is held by their entire Church in the highest esteem. We have chosen, therefore, to designate them *Christians, or Disciples*, as being their *name* only, and not as implying any superiority possessed by them over other Christians. We seek to be courteous to them, and while we shall not withhold the truth in demolishing their theory, we hope to do so in the spirit that becomes the gospel of Christ.

There is, certainly, no command in the Bible that the Church shall have a certain name, and the variety of terms by which the people and Church are called shows that the name is not essential. They are called Church, Church of God, Church at Corinth, seven Churches of Asia, flock of Christ, children, household of faith, saints, disciples, and Christians, and possibly by other names. The name “Christian,” preferred by this new Church, is used

only thrice in the New Testament. It was first employed about ten years after the day of Pentecost: "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch." (Acts xi. 26.) Whether this was in derision by enemies, and confined to this one place, is unknown; but we may rationally conclude that it was not intended to be the only name of the Church, as it is employed but thrice, and then without any direction to others to continue its use. Lord's-day is used once in the New Testament, and this Church, for the sake of singularity, have substituted it for Sabbath, the latter being frequently found in the Scriptures.

The followers of John the Baptist were called disciples—they were not called Baptists; yet this is no reason that a Church preferring that name should not be called the Baptist Church. After the time the disciples were first called Christians nearly all the other names, stated above, were applied to them. How inconvenient, if all the Churches had the same name! It would be as much so as if the citizens of a town were all named alike, or the children of one family were called by the same name. When God gave his people, the Jews, a home and a Church, he divided them into twelve tribes, and gave each a name, and a place, and an inheritance. But this matter, small as it is, has been the theme of many a discourse in this Church, and the occasion of many an attack by the people, who claim to act and speak only by authority of the Lord, while they charge sectarianism on all Christendom outside of their own ranks, because, for

distinction, some are called Episcopalians, some Presbyterians, some Baptists, and some Methodists. Is not this straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel? When the *name* of the Church is the theme of the preacher five times oftener than the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart, is it not making much of "great little things," and neglecting the weightier matters of the law?

III. The *offer of union* made by the Christians, or Disciples, to other Churches is now to be considered. This offer has been made from the commencement of the Church, and is presented by their preachers in every protracted-meeting, alleging, as they do, that it is made in all fairness and liberality, and that it is declined by other Churches only through perverseness and denominational pride. Perhaps no one thing has given their people more complacent satisfaction, or gained them more converts.

The union of all Churches is proposed in the following manner: Assuming that all admit the desirableness of a vast Christian organization having *one name*, and having *no written creed*, the Bible being the only authority recognized, they propose to the Christian world that all unite with them on the Bible on the easy and reasonable terms, as they suggest, that Christian baptism is by immersion alone, and that the remission of sins is promised only in immersion. Then, to insure union, and for the sake of liberality, they propose that all other doctrines of the Bible shall not be regarded as arti-

cles of faith, binding on the consciences and conduct of men, but as opinions, or as truths, to be learned from the Scriptures by the examination of each one for himself, subject to acceptance or rejection, as the investigation, when made, may suggest to each person. This offer of union we propose to examine.

1. It is not *desirable* that all professing Christians should be organized and united in one Church. If this Church should be congregational in its polity, and without general jurisdiction, each Society forming rules for itself, then such universal Church would be inefficient. What could it do in the way of law or government? Might not a Church in New York have one rule for the qualification of ministers, and a Church in New Orleans another? and so concerning any other question there might arise the same divisions and differences of opinion and action; but if the Church should possess general jurisdiction uniting the whole, how could this be without legislation and ecclesiastical power, making it necessary to have laws and by-laws, rules, articles of faith, and all the essential qualities of a written and authoritative creed?

What would be the political effect of such a Church? Its vote could determine the fate of President or Governor. Good men would live in it from a sense of duty, as there would be but one Church, and bad men would live in it for the "loaves and fishes," and for place, and power, and influence. When the Roman Catholics had the ascendancy, so that there was but one Church, persecution was then at its highest power, and Sacra-

mentarianism made its most rigid exactions. To deny that the bread and wine in the sacrament of the Supper were the actual body and blood of Christ was to prepare for martyrdom.

2. The offer of union is not *sincere*. The Christian world would not be allowed to hold the doctrines of the Bible as opinions according to each man's judgment and conscience by agreeing to the mode and design of baptism. Suppose all had agreed to the terms of union named, and had entered the organization in the best faith, and a sincere inquirer after truth, on reading the Bible, should find that from the days of Abraham to Christ *children* were allowed a place in the Church; that the Lord and his apostles had declared no repeal of this privilege; that in a number of places named in the New Testament whole households had been baptized on the faith of parents; that Jesus had declared concerning infants, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven;" and that, by an almost unbroken chain of history from the apostolic age to the present time, it was certainly true that infants had been received into the Church by baptism; and, from all these considerations, should determine that his children were entitled to baptism and membership in the Church—would this liberal people, who make so free with the Bible, allow his claim? *Never*. One thing is certain: uniting with this Church, we leave our infant children in the world exposed to Satan until they reach adult age. Here, then, is *one opinion* that would not be tolerated. At this point we find a Church without a creed having

three specific articles of faith—viz.: immersion the only baptism, remission of sins only in baptism, and baptism for adults alone.

Again: suppose a Christian in this united Church, on reading the Scriptures, should find that before our Lord made his advent into the world our Heavenly Father had uniformly set apart certain men to the priestly office; that when the Saviour appeared he chose certain men to be apostles and certain men to be preachers; that the apostles had called preachers ambassadors of Christ, and had asked, "How can they preach, except they be sent?" and had declared, solemnly, that Christ sent them to preach the gospel, and not to baptize; and, from all these facts, suppose this Christian should determine that none but those whom our Lord calls to preach should preach the gospel, and administer the sacraments—would he be allowed to act upon such a conviction of truth? He would not; but he would have forced on him any person who felt qualified, by education or natural gifts, to be a preacher to assume and exercise all the functions of the ministry. Hence, another article of faith is added, making the fourth—viz.: any person who chooses, if he has made the good confession, and been immersed for the remission of sins, may preach the gospel of Christ, and administer the sacraments.

Many other things are held and taught by this Church as persistently as if they were bound to them by the most authoritative confession of faith; still, on other subjects of the gravest importance this Church is divided—indeed, there are more

divisions among them on essential doctrines than are found to exist on unimportant questions. For example: the Church is divided as to the depravity of man, the divinity of Christ, the time and efficacy of prayer, and the work of the Holy Spirit in conviction, conversion, and sanctification; while it is closely united on the propositions, no creed, immersion the only baptism, remission of past sins in baptism alone, and an offer of union on the Bible to the other Churches, provided *they* are allowed to prescribe the terms. So we see that the offer of union as proposed is insincere and wholly impracticable.

3. The union named is *illiberal* and *unreasonable*. The Christian world is asked to unite as one Church, acknowledging that there is no baptism without immersion, and no pardon of sins without baptism. Now, in the whole range of theological disputation, no two questions could be presented involving more controversy than these, and before we close we will show that none have less proof to sustain them, and more proof to oppose them. We can see very plainly the illiberal and unreasonable nature of a proposition for union (which always implies liberality and friendship) by asking other Churches to admit as *true* the very questions *in dispute*, when the overwhelming preponderance of evidence is on the other side.

At the same time the offer is made we find them asking the other Churches to accept and hold as *opinions*, and not as *articles of faith*, many doctrines of the Bible which are of the greatest interest and

value. Now, it is certainly true that each one of the doctrines taught, or supposed to be taught, in the Bible, that may be held as an opinion in this Church, is either *true* or *false*. If the doctrine be *true*, what right has any body of men, or any individual, to hold it as an opinion, to be acted upon, or not acted upon, as he chooses? If it be *false*, what right has any Church, or any individual, to hold it as an opinion, influencing the believer of the false position every day of his life, while he occupies a place in the Church where he may constantly inject the poisonous error into the fold of God? In either view, whether the offer of union be considered as to the disputed questions which are to be admitted or the latitude of opinion that may be indulged, the terms proposed are illiberal and unreasonable.

If it should be said, in reply to the foregoing arguments, that the Christians, or Disciples, have a *line of doctrine*, believed and taught with as much uniformity as any Church, we answer: With the majority of the Church there is such a line of doctrine, but it is held *without authority*, except as each individual may choose to fall in with the main body, either in whole or in part; and the whole line is mixed and intermixed with error, producing much contention and many varieties of belief.

Perhaps the following would be a brief and fair summary of the *line of doctrines and opinions* held *verbally* by this Church: 1. Immersion alone is baptism. 2. The remission of past sins takes place only in baptism. 3. Infants are not to be baptized. 4. Man is not totally depraved, there being moral

strength sufficient in himself to do the will of God. 5. The Holy Spirit, in conversion and sanctification, operates on the mind and heart of man only through the Scriptures. 6. Prayer is not commanded to be made by any man before he is baptized; after baptism, prayer is offered only because it is *a duty* commanded in the Bible, and we are not to expect any direct answer to our petitions, except as the Spirit of God influences us through the written word—this being the only means of receiving spiritual knowledge or aid. 7. We receive the Holy Spirit first in baptism, and then only in connection with the Scriptures. 8. There is no divine call from heaven to men in this age, or any other age since the days of the apostles, to preach the gospel. 9. The evidence to a man that he is a Christian is derived solely from his knowledge that he has obeyed Christ in baptism, and does not consist of inward consciousness received through the Spirit of God, bearing witness with his Spirit that he is born again. 10. There is no promise that any person who has died without having been immersed, at any time since the day of Pentecost, went to heaven. Here are *ten* articles of religion, held and maintained *verbally* by this Church—enough, truly, to make the doctrinal part of a fair-sized Confession of Faith, or Discipline.

IV. We proceed to consider the *unsafe* and *unscriptural* mode of receiving members into this Church.

Other Churches have received the severest cen-

tures by the Christians, or Disciples, for encouraging *prayer for penitents*, and for directing *penitents* themselves to pray before uniting with the Church and being baptized, introducing the subject in every protracted-meeting held by them, and often using strong terms of ridicule and contempt for altars of prayer, affirming all the time that for their formula of receiving members they have a "Thus saith the Lord."

For a moment we notice their objection to prayer for penitents. The authority for an altar of prayer will be seen instantly, that the duty is plain that all men should pray, having the promise of God to hear and answer the suppliant. Hear the Scriptures: "Ask, and ye shall receive," "Pray without ceasing," "I will that men pray everywhere," "And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint." "God be merciful to me, a sinner"—this was in the outer court of the temple, and a broken-hearted penitent was the pleader; but we have a direct example: Paul described a scene in one of the Churches similar to many we have seen in those Churches where God is asked to help the unconverted by his Holy Spirit, through the Redeemer, but the likeness to which we have never seen in any Church where *obedience* is relied on as the strength of religious life. The passage is in 1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25. It is in a meeting where there is much religious zeal and power displayed, and where prayer, preaching, and the recital of Christian experience go together. When Paul preached he often told his experience. Hear him

describe the effect on hard sinners: "But if all prophesy, and there come in *one that believeth not*, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all: and *thus* are the *secrets of his heart made manifest*; and so *falling down on his face* he will worship God, and report that God is *in you* of a truth." Was there ever such a scene witnessed in the new Church? Here is a convicted sinner falling down on his face in prayer before he is baptized, and before he leaves the house he is so changed that he *worships* God. His experience of pardoned sins and a change of heart is so much like the Christians around him that he reports that God is *in them*. All this was after the day of Pentecost. After this brief defense of prayer for penitents, and of a place for prayer, we proceed to examine the reception of members by the Christians, or Disciples.

The manner of receiving members into this Church is well known in those communities where they have a foothold. They profess to have a plain "Thus saith the Lord" for the proceeding. Usually a discourse has been delivered, but this is not essential to the performance. The theme is likely to be immersion as the mode of baptism, or the remission of sins only in baptism, or it may be a tirade against other Churches for their supposed sectarianism. It is not apt to be a sermon on the sinfulness of the heart, the nature and necessity of repentance, the duty and value of prayer, the efficacy of faith in Christ, or the witness of the Holy Spirit. Doubtless, three-fourths of all persons who have ever joined this Church did so immediately after hearing

such a discourse as we have named. They were taught that it was not their duty to pray until they were baptized; that they were not to expect the influences of the Holy Spirit until they were baptized, and then only through the written word; that they were not totally depraved; and that faith was no more than the belief of testimony. The temper of mind and state of heart with which the large majority enter this Church may be easily known from these facts.

One question only is to be asked the candidate for admission. Mr. Campbell will give us the precise words of this question: "Do you believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the Son of God?" ("C. and R. Debate," p. 811.) And then Mr. C. adds, as explanatory, and as showing that this is all the examination to be made: "If any man cordially respond, Yes, we baptize him. We ask on that *subject no farther questions.*" Now, observe: the candidate may be a stranger, his character and history unknown, the state of his heart, whether changed or unchanged, is not asked or known, and his belief in Christ is only in the fact that *he is the Messiah*, and not that *he then trusts him for spiritual life*. Not one word is asked whether he has *repented*, although the theory held is that faith, *repentance*, and immersion all meet, and are alike essential to the remission of sins. We have never heard of any person, on applying for admission into this Church, being *asked a question concerning his repentance*. All are received on professing to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, and being immersed. Depravity is denied, and

prayer and the Holy Spirit's influence are postponed to the time of baptism. All this being true, the person immersed evidently experiences no *change of heart* to that time. As to his belief that Christ is the Messiah, he doubtless had that much faith before he entered the house where he made the good confession. But we search for a "Thus saith the Lord" for this mode of receiving members.

We do not know but one authority that can be relied on with any plausibility. It is the baptism of the eunuch by Philip. (Acts viii. 36, 37.) We give the history: "And the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." This was a case peculiar in itself, there being no other like it in the New Testament. It is not stated as one of authority for the Church, either by precept or example; nor is it like the course pursued by the people calling themselves the Christian Church. With them, *the preacher* asks the *candidate for admission* the question, Do you believe that Jesus is the Messiah? and he answers in the affirmative; but here the eunuch, who represents the sinner, asked Philip, the preacher, the question, as they were about passing a certain water, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" "Philip preached unto him Jesus." (Acts viii. 35.) He found the eunuch reading Isaiah, concerning the humiliation and work of Christ, and he made this prophecy his text. In it was a prediction concern-

ing Christ, "So shall he sprinkle many nations," and this naturally introduced the subject of baptism. Philip, the preacher, did not ask the eunuch a single question. He only answered the question propounded to him by the eunuch. Surely here is no authority to preachers or Churches to ask the sinner, invariably, the question, Do you believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God? So this much-valued and much-vaunted right to receive members on this single question begins and ends with Philip and the eunuch.

We find *four* examples in the New Testament of awakened sinners who asked searching questions as to their duty, but not one where any preacher asked the question prescribed by Mr. Campbell. The penitent Jews, at Pentecost, asked, "What shall we do?" Saul of Tarsus, on his way to Damascus, asked, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The eunuch asked, "See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" The Philippian jailer asked, and the only one who did ask this question, "What must I do *to be saved*?" and as soon as the three last words were spoken, Paul and Silas answered, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (Acts xvi. 30, 31.) Did any preacher of this new Church ever give this answer to the same question? Never; it would destroy the whole theory of pardon as taught by them.

With what reason, we ask, can the Christians, or Disciples, claim direct and positive authority for receiving members by asking the question named, and

making a constant assault on all Christians for receiving members in any other way? We would not be understood as saying that there is any objection to the question asked as a test of the sinner's mind and heart, so far as it goes; but the wrong consists in the assertion that in the gospel of Christ this is the appointed manner of receiving members, and that all other modes are unscriptural and sectarian, and, also, in the fact that the examination of character is so defective that a person joining this Church may not have prayed during his past life, nor repented, nor experienced a change of heart, nor have any other faith than to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, without any love of his heart toward him as his Redeemer.

It would seem to be a self-evident proposition that the true mode of receiving members into any Church, whether by one or twenty questions, would be to remove all the difficulties in the way of the person asking membership. The minister, or Church, should ascertain whether he understood the moral turpitude of his own heart; the glorious nature of Christ his Lord—his power and willingness to save him; the value of faith in Christ; and the change in his own soul from a relish for sin to a love of God and holiness. No single question will complete this examination, and one question will not suit all persons. Some, from careful religious training, stand all the time near the kingdom of heaven, and, like the eunuch, would be converted under a single sermon, and in an hour's time go on their way rejoicing; others require the thun-

ders of Sinai to arouse them, and then “line upon line,” and a long and careful probation as babes in Christ.

We have now seen the evil effects of unrestrained liberty in allowing so many doctrines of the Bible to be held as individual opinions, and not as articles of faith, by authority of the Church; also, we have shown the tenacity with which this Church clings to minor and unimportant points, where they may choose to prefer them, and how readily they deny, or hold in small esteem, many of the essential truths taught in the Scriptures. In their nomenclature the Sabbath-day, named many times in the New Testament, must be called Lord’s-day, which is named only once, as this will give them peculiarity and consequence. Their Church must be called the Christian Church—the name Christian being applied to believers but thrice in the New Testament, and one of these times, probably, in derision. In receiving members into the Church, only *one question* is asked, and that is a question which even the devils would answer in the affirmative, as they *believe* and tremble. For this question the New Testament furnishes neither precept nor example; yet all Churches not conforming to this mode receive the severest censures by the new Church. An offer of union is made by them to the Christian world on the Bible as the basis, but, when we examine for a moment the terms proposed, we find that the doctrines that other Churches are required to admit are those which are the most disputed, and the doctrines which may be held as opinions are

those which are the very life of truth and godliness.

Fairly considered, we believe we have stated the general views of this Church. It is worthy of notice that there is not a single proposition held by them which is sustained either by the Scriptures or by the learned and good men who have lived in the centuries since our Lord ascended on high. Beginning with man, sinful and unregenerate, he is placed by them in such strength of his own that the sacrifice of the blood of Christ is unnecessary to save him, as he has all power to believe and obey the divine law without assistance from the Lord. The sinner is to read the inspired word of God as he reads any other book, and when he finds it to be true, through the strength of his own understanding, he is immersed for the remission of sins, and thus becomes, as he supposes, a Christian.

Controversy has arisen from the claims asserted by this Church. Its voice has been raised against the Christian world. We do not regard the true cause of this hostility as proceeding from any thing peculiar in the *people* who hold the sentiments named, but it is owing entirely to the erroneous doctrines on which they build—viz.: immersion alone is baptism, and the remission of past sins takes place only in baptism—and the latitude given to *opinions of men* to avoid the necessity of having a written creed containing articles of religious belief.

Such pretensions have excited opposition on every side; for while the Baptists will universally agree to the first proposition, that immersion alone is baptism,

they will deny the second, that the remission of sins takes place only in baptism, and will never agree to a system so loose that many of the doctrines of the Bible which are of the first importance to the salvation of men may be regarded or disregarded, and cannot be held as authority binding on all, but are only received as opinions and conclusions of each man reading the Scriptures, and deciding as his own mind dictates. Then, again, the whole Pedobaptist world will discard the two doctrines presented as the foundation of this Church, with all the opinions and conclusions drawn from them; so that, evidently, there can be no peace with a Church resting entirely upon error. Hence it is that *war* is proclaimed against all Churches by every preacher in this Church, and in every protracted-meeting held by them the usual themes of the discourses delivered will be the sectarianism of other Churches; the sinfulness of having creeds; the pretentious claims of ministers in other Churches; the folly of expecting spiritual influence or offering prayers before baptism; the partial goodness of human nature; and the power to obey God without farther assistance than is found in reading the Scriptures, and doing as they direct.

V. We come, now, to examine the main positions of this Church, and to show their weakness and error. The first is: *Immersion alone is Christian baptism.*

Immersion as the only Christian baptism is a proposition having the *least proof* to support it of

any disputed question in theology, considering the amount of controversy which it has occasioned. Its adherents have discussed it thousands of times, avowing it to be as evidently true and plain as a demonstration in mathematics, while we do not hesitate to assert that if a thorough scholar were to read the New Testament for the first time, not knowing that such a question had been agitated, and should then be asked *how* baptisms were administered, he would never think of answering, By immersion. To give immersion as the only baptism a reasonable plausibility, it must be made to occupy a prominent place in the Church—such as the test of qualification for the Lord's Supper, or the connecting link with faith and repentance to secure the remission of sins—and then be preached in the Churches believing it on innumerable occasions, and written in many books, ever keeping prominently before the mind the few scriptures which seem to favor this mode. If there should be only a quotation, without comment, of the scriptures proving that baptism was administered without immersion, it would break the force of every sermon preached to prove immersion the only mode.

Our treatment of this subject is intended to be a *plain presentation* of the truth for *plain people*, so that the unlearned may understand it, and the learned shall not be able to gainsay the conclusion. We choose this course not because immersion is helped by investigations made by the learned in the original languages in which the Scriptures were written, or through the aid of lexicons, translations,

or the classics, but simply because the plain, common-sense view of the subject, studied in the light of the Scriptures, which are received by all denominations, and with an English lexicon to aid us, will be sufficient to prove that Christian baptism is not by immersion alone; and we trust the reader will agree with us that, as great and good men have occupied the different sides of this controversy, it becomes us to enter upon the examination without prejudging the decision either way, but regarding the whole subject as deserving the most thoughtful and prayerful study.

1. It is not *probable*, considering the number and variety of duties specified in the New Testament, that there should be but *one* having a *prescribed mode*—immersionists will not contend that there is a particular mode for any thing but baptism. Now, when we remember how many duties of a public and private nature are enjoined on Christians in the New Testament, and find that all of them are tested by the *spirit* with which they are done, and not by the *manner* of doing them, we are surprised that baptism should be made the exception by requiring a specific mode of administering it; and, where there is an honest difference of opinion on the question whether it is or is not appointed to be by immersion, this thought—that it is the only mode supposed to be found in the New Testament—raises a strong presumption against the theory advocated.

The Lord left in the Church two sacraments—the Supper, ordained before he was crucified, and Baptism, authoritatively given in the commission

after his death; yet, singularly enough, Baptists of every class, whether holding baptism as a test of qualification for the communion or for the remission of sins, seem to fail to perceive that Christ had the sacraments separated, both as to *time* and *design*, and that, if time is material, the Supper was first instituted, and, if any precedence be given, it should be to this sacrament as a test of qualification for baptism, and not to baptism as a test and qualification for the Supper. But with Pedobaptists such trouble will never arise; they know that neither baptism nor the Supper has a prescribed mode, and that each has a *separate design*.

Again, to show the improbability that baptism is only by immersion, when no other duty has a prescribed mode, we remark, comparing this sacrament and the Supper, that our Lord used *bread* and *wine* in the Supper—of the *quantity* of each we are not informed. How comes it to pass that all immersionists, who can see all virtue in the *quantity* of water used in baptism, should agree that in administering the Supper the *least quantity* of bread and wine is best, so that hundreds can be served from a small supply, having left at all times a portion of the consecrated elements? Why is it that when Christ and his disciples observed this feast in a *reclining* position, all the Baptists have no conscience as to the mode, whether they *sit*, *stand*, or *kneel*? Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount *sitting*—why do they allow their preachers to *stand*? Prayers are valid when made kneeling, sitting, or standing; singing may be conducted in any meter; and so

every thing but baptism may be performed without reference to the *mode*. Does not this raise a presumption, at least, that immersion is not essential to baptism?

2. No one, as far as we know, among immersionists has ever stated that our Heavenly Father has not made the *mode of baptism* as *plain* to the comprehension of the readers of the Bible as it is possible for language to make it. Indeed, our better nature would instantly spurn the assertion that the Father of mercies, directing by positive law an ordinance to be observed, having but *one mode* and being of the very gravest spiritual significance, should leave involved in any doubt the *certainty of that mode*. Immersionists always contend for the plainness of their proof. To make the mode *plain* to the reader of the Bible, if baptism is by immersion alone, would be like all the Lord's teachings when he ordained a mode. Does he command an ark to be built? the character of the wood, the height and width, the size of doors and windows, and the number and kinds of all animals and other creatures which are to enter the ark, are directed with such exactness and circumstantiality that no dispute could arise on any of these points. Does God direct a tabernacle or a temple? the description of every thing in the building—the vessels, the necessary material and preparation, and the men, including their dress and their duty, who are to serve in them—is so perfect that no artisan could measure with line, and rule, and square, and compass with greater precision. And so, with the same certainty, if im-

mersion be the only baptism, will we find it in the Scriptures. By the words employed, by the preparation made, by the place selected, and by the performance described, will we find, invariably, that immersion alone is baptism. But if this certainty is always wanting, the strongest probability arises that the theory is wrong.

Will any living man say that immersion, as the only mode of baptism, is so plainly taught in the New Testament that the great and good men, the ministers and scholars, living in the centuries past have found it with the same unanimity and certainty that they have found repentance, or faith, or prayer? Surely they have not. Why is this so? It cannot be alleged that it was their ignorance, or their prejudice, for we fail to find either in their holy writings, left as a rich legacy to the Church. What volumes have they given to the world to open, explain, and simplify to our minds the Scriptures! What zeal, what unction, what prayers, what consecration to God, what concern for souls, what laborious and useful lives, and what happy deaths! and yet how many thousands of such men have failed to find immersion in any of the proofs offered. Can it be *plain*, then, from the Scriptures that immersion alone is baptism? If *true*, it is not *plain*; but our Lord would undoubtedly have made it *plain* if *true*. Therefore, the strongest probability exists that the doctrine asserted is an error.

3. Another probability that immersion is not the only baptism is found in the fact that in the Scriptures commonly received and known as King James's

version the word "*baptize*" has never been translated "*immerse*." In the year 1607, there being a number of versions of the Scriptures, some complete and some incomplete, none of which gave entire satisfaction, King James appointed fifty-four of the most learned and pious men in the kingdom to translate the Scriptures, forty-seven of whom entered upon the duty assigned them. These men were divided into six companies, and a separate portion of Scriptures was allotted to each. After working on the parts given them for about three years, they met together, and, in full consultation, each portion was read and examined by the whole body, until all the forty-seven persons came to an agreement on the entire Bible. In the year 1611 the Bible, as it now stands, was first published; and so satisfactorily has the work been received wherever the English tongue is spoken, that, after two and a half centuries and more have elapsed, it is regarded with undiminished confidence and favor. Now, if *baptize*, which appears so often in the New Testament, meant *immerse*, why was it not so translated? The only answer is, Because it would not *bear the translation*. But if immersion is the only Christian baptism, it would bear that translation. The men who made our present version, as is well known, were inclined to favor immersion, but their reputation was dearer to them than their preferences. What years of controversy had been saved, if that translation could have been made! And would it not have been made, if such had been the invariable meaning of the word? It would. But now such a translation

will hardly be found, except as a strictly partisan work, and none of this kind will receive the public favor.

Just here we add that a plain mind, desirous of the truth, may safely determine whether *baptize* and *immerse* mean the same thing, by consulting Webster's Dictionary, an English lexicon recognized and used in all our schools and colleges, and by all our learned men. Hear his definitions: "*Baptize*, to administer the sacrament of baptism to—to christen. *Baptism*, the application of water to a person as a sacrament or religious ceremony. *Immerse*, to put under water, or other fluid, to plunge, to dip." Now, cannot any person see that baptize signifies the application of *water to the person* baptized, and not an *immersion*; and that immerse signifies putting, plunging, or dipping any thing under water, and not to baptize.

4. The *few examples* of baptism in the New Testament which seem to favor immersion in the statement of the facts, and then only inferentially, is a convincing argument that it was not administered in that mode.

From the commencement of our Lord's ministry to the close of the writing of the New Testament was a period of about sixty-three years. During this time four Gospels, giving the life, doctrines, teaching, death, and resurrection of our Lord; The Acts of the Apostles, embracing the first thirty years of Church-history after the famous day of Pentecost; fourteen Epistles, doctrinal and practical, by Paul, the great preacher and writer; two Epistles

by Peter, who had opened his mission to the Jews on the day of Pentecost, and to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius; one by Jude, one by James, and three by John the Apostle; and the book of Revelation, by the same author, comprise all the sacred and inspired books furnished to the world by authority of the Saviour of men, after the close of the Old Testament. Now, if immersion is the only baptism as taught in all these books, we shall find it stated repeatedly, and, considering its importance, it will be made known with such plainness that even the children will see it is true. But when we come to read through the entire Book, we find but *four occasions* of administering baptism where immersion is in the least degree probable, and then it is only so by supposing other things occurred besides those which are named. In the proper place we will show how many *suppositions* have to be made in each of these examples before we reach the conclusion that there was an immersion. The four examples named are: John baptizing in Jordan, John baptizing in Enon, Philip baptizing the eunuch in a desert, and Lydia baptized with her household on a river-side. Literally and truly, all other examples of baptism named in the New Testament have no appearance of being by immersion, but just the opposite. This new Christian Church, that we are now examining, maintains that Christian baptism did not begin until the day of Pentecost. If this be true, *the mode* of baptism before Pentecost, under a prior dispensation, could not prove *the mode* under the Christian dispensation unless there were some words of Script-

ure to show that the mode in each was the same. No such words are found. Strictly speaking, then, the Christians, or Disciples, are limited, so far as *examples* are the proof, to the eunuch baptized in a desert, with no certainty as to the quantity of water on hand, or the manner of using it, and to Lydia and her household baptized in sight of a river, with no certainty that either she or her household, or the preacher, went down to the river. But we design liberality, and intend giving this Church the entire New Testament from which to prove *one immersion*, if possible.

5. The statements found in the New Testament of the *act of baptism*, without considering any thing preceding or succeeding them, would doubtless at some one time describe immersion, if that were the only mode. It would be wholly unaccountable that, in the fourteen examples of water baptism named in the New Testament (that being the number, and no more), if immersion were commanded, making the *mode* as essential as the *element* water, it should not be stated. We know that the Scriptures are very frequently precise in the description of things, showing us how they were done when the manner of doing them was not essential. Two thieves were crucified with Jesus, and we are told one was placed on his right hand and the other on his left, and yet this description was not material to the narrative. When Stephen was stoned to death, “the witnesses *laid down their clothes* at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul”—but this was barely descriptive. Our Lord preached the Sermon on the Mount *sitting*,

and, while we have this minute information, it was evidently not essential to the inimitable discourse delivered. We could quote hundreds of such instances of description. Now, the question is this: Will an inspired Book, given so much to detail and perspicuity in the statement of facts as they occurred—many of which are plainly not material—and in which *only one exclusive mode* is prescribed, fail in every instance, when stating the *act*, to state the *mode*?

We proceed to give an enumeration, in the words of Scripture, of every case of water baptism named, showing the *act alone* as described, in which we aver there is not one example of immersion given. They are as follows: 1. John baptizing in Jordan—"And *were baptized* of him in Jordan" (Matt. iii. 6); "And *were all baptized of him* in the river of Jordan" (Mark i. 5). 2. Jesus baptized by John—"And Jesus, *when he was baptized*, went up straightway out of the water" (Matt. iii. 16). 3. John in Enon—"And John also *was baptizing* in Enon near to Salim, because there was much water there; and they came, and *were baptized*" (John iii. 23). 4. Jesus baptizing in Judea—"There he tarried with them, and *baptized*" (John iii. 22). 5. Day of Pentecost—"Then they that gladly received his word *were baptized*" (Acts ii. 41). 6. City of Samaria—"They *were baptized*, both men and women" (Acts viii. 12). 7. Simon—"And when he *was baptized*" (Acts viii. 13). 8. The eunuch—"And he *baptized him*" (Acts viii. 38). 9. Saul—"And arose, and *was baptized*" (Acts ix. 18). 10. Cornelius—"And he commanded

them *to be baptized*” (Acts x. 48). 11. Lydia—“And when she *was baptized*, and her household” (Acts xvi. 15). 12. The jailer—“And *was baptized*, he and all his, straightway” (Acts xvi. 33). 13. The twelve at Ephesus—“They *were baptized* in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts xix. 5). 14. Paul baptizing—“I *baptized* none of you, but Crispus and Gaius” (1 Cor. i. 14); “And I *baptized* also the household of Stephanas: besides I know not whether I *baptized* any other. For Christ sent me *not to baptize*, but to preach the gospel” (1 Cor. i. 16, 17).

Now, we ask every candid man if there be an instance of *immersion* stated in all these examples. If he replies, They *were immersed*, because some of the baptisms were in Jordan, a river, and in Enon, near Salim—because there was *much water* there—we answer that while we admit the persons baptized in Jordan could have been immersed, we also know that because the baptism was in a river it was not necessarily by immersion. Every living man knows that a baptism in a river could be by *immersion*, *sprinkling*, or *pouring*. The *place* does not prove the *mode*. All that it can prove is, it might have been by immersion, and it is as true that it might not have been by immersion; so that at last we are compelled to look *at the act* to determine how it was performed. But here are only two examples in fourteen that seem to favor immersion. In the other twelve there is no proof, from the description of the *act as done*, that there was any immersion. It is clear that exclusive immersionists, relying on this mode as positive law, are bound to make proof of the law.

Have they done so in this description? They have not succeeded, if there were no other examples furnished than John's baptisms in Jordan and in Enon.

We shall now examine this subject by the examples furnished in the New Testament, in the order following: 1. John's baptisms. 2. Our Lord's treatment of baptism. 3. The Epistles of Paul and Peter, so far as they name baptism. 4. The Acts of the Apostles, giving the history of the Church for thirty years.

I. JOHN'S BAPTISMS.—Did John the Baptist administer baptism only by immersion? or, rather, Did he at any time immerse?

1. In the providence of God, John gave the best description of his *manner of baptizing* that we shall ever find. He said: "I indeed baptize you *with water* unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you *with the Holy Ghost*, and *with fire*." (Matt. iii. 11.) In this scripture John speaks of his *baptism with water* and his Lord's baptism with the Holy Ghost, and with fire, in the same words; and as water baptism is always the type, sign, and seal of spiritual baptism, the description will naturally be alike in both baptisms. John's baptism was *with water*, as they had seen it performed; Christ's baptism on the day of Pentecost, the time referred to by John, would be *with the Holy Ghost*, and *with fire*. As was Christ's mode of spiritual baptism, so was John's of water baptism.

Now, we ask, Did any one ever see or hear of an immersion *with water*? An immersion is always *in* or *under* water. We proceed to show that the day of Pentecost was the time prophesied by John when the Lord's baptism referred to should take place. Before the day of Pentecost, Luke gives this testimony: "But wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized *with water*; but ye shall be baptized *with the Holy Ghost* not many days hence." (Acts i. 4, 5.) The very same words, *with water* and *with the Holy Ghost*, used by John three years before, are now repeated by the Saviour, and written by Luke. When the day of Pentecost was fully come, Peter, in his sermon, quoted from the Prophet Joel, who had predicted the spiritual baptism and its mode, as named by John the Baptist and his Lord, in the following language: "But this is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel, And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will *pour out*"—this was the mode—"of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my hand-maidens I will *pour out* in those days of my Spirit." (Acts ii. 16-18.) In the first four verses of the chapter Peter had described minutely the spiritual baptism referred to by Joel, and John, and Jesus. Now, it is plainly true that if the Spirit's baptism administered by Christ was by *pouring*, and both baptisms as administered are described in the same words precisely—*with water, with the Holy Ghost, and with*

fire—then John's baptism was by *pouring*, and not by *immersion*.

2. We now notice the *places* and *circumstances* of John's baptisms. His was a dispensation in which baptism was administered from its commencement to its close. His preaching was in the wilderness of Judea, extending southward from Jericho and the fords of Jordan to the Dead Sea. It was so near the time of the great outpouring of the Holy Spirit after Christ's ascension, which had been a long time foretold, that it was proper that *baptism*, the type, should precede the *Spirit's outpouring*, which was the *substance*; and as John was the immediate harbinger and forerunner of Christ, such a ministry, at once calling men to repentance and displaying prominently the emblem of inward purity, which was baptism, it was eminently adapted to his work. From the foregoing observations, it will be plain that wherever we find John *preaching*, we shall find him *baptizing*. We fear that many immersionists have never thought of John the Baptist in any other manner than as being *in Jordan* baptizing, and *in water* of a certain depth; but we shall find that the voice of John began to "cry in the wilderness," and not on the banks of Jordan, and that the first cry was to call men to repentance, and baptize them, pointing them to Christ. Christ asked the *multitudes*, concerning John, "What went ye out into the wilderness to see" (Matt. xi. 7)? showing that multitudes attended his preaching in the wilderness of Judea before he went to the Jordan.

But, to make this matter very plain, let us collate

from the Scriptures the *places* where John baptized. We shall never understand how John baptized, whether by immersion or affusion, until we attach full credit to his own expressions on the subject, and read together all the *places* where he baptized, and the *circumstances* attending the baptisms. The immersionist is bound to the decision that all John's baptisms, and all other baptisms, were by immersion. We shall see.

John baptized in *five places*. We notice them separately:

1. In all the *country about Jordan*—"And he came into all the country *about Jordan*, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; as it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one *crying in the wilderness*, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Luke iii. 3, 4). Even to this wilderness we have seen that John attracted the multitudes, and here in *all the country* he preached and baptized. We can affirm that this was not in *Jordan*.

2. The next place was in *Bethabara, beyond Jordan*—"And they asked him and said unto him, Why *baptizest* thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, *I baptize with water*, but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in *Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing*" (John i. 25-28). Here was a confer-

ence held between the Pharisees and John on the subject of his authority to preach and baptize. They found him doing both, not *in Jordan*, but *beyond Jordan*, in a place called *Bethabara*. Were these baptisms—beyond Jordan, in the country, and in Bethabara—by immersion, according to any proof found in the history?

3. But, to make the *place and mode* of John's baptisms still plainer, we find that our Lord *made his abode* where John baptized. Speaking of Jesus, it is said, "And went away again *beyond Jordan into the place* where John at first baptized; and *there he abode*. And many *resorted* unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. And many believed on him *there*." (John x. 40-42.) Here we learn the additional fact that our Lord went "*into the place*," and *abode* for some time, where John at first baptized; and many *resorted* to the place, and heard Jesus, and saw his miracles, and believed on him. Here are three places of John's baptisms—in the country about Jordan, in Bethabara beyond Jordan, and in a place where Jesus abode for some time. Were any of these baptisms by immersion? Not a word of proof exists that they were. The places and the circumstances forbid such a conclusion. If the expression "*into the place* where John at first baptized" had been used by saying "into the water," an immersionist would place every letter in italics. Now, from John's own description that he baptized *with* water, and that the Lord baptized *with* the Spirit, the latter being done by *pouring*, and certain-

ly, therefore, the former in the same mode, and from such a minute account in the word of God of three prominent places where he baptized—viz.: the *country about Jordan, Bethabara, beyond Jordan*, and the place *beyond Jordan where Jesus abode*—we are prepared to examine other descriptions of the places where he baptized, and the circumstances surrounding them, affirming that to this point there is not a word favoring immersion.

4. *John baptizing in Jordan*—"Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him *in Jordan*, confessing their sins" (Matt. iii. 5, 6); "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway *out of the water*; and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him; and, lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. iii. 16, 17).

It will be admitted, we think, that if immersion is not proved in these verses it cannot be proved by any example given in the New Testament. Now the whole strength of proof consists in the fact, and nothing else, that John at this time baptized *in Jordan*, and that Jesus, being baptized *in Jordan*, *came up out of the water*. There is not a word to describe *the mode* of the baptism, except that John said this very baptism *in Jordan* was *with water* (Matt. iii. 11). We ask, seriously, if the object of the writer was to convey the idea that both Christ and the repenting sinners whom John baptized *were immersed*, could he and would he not do so with

much more plainness than the mere statement that it was in a river, and that the Lord came up out of the river? As to the statement concerning the Lord's coming up straightway out of the water, it is connected not with the preacher's preceding action of baptizing him as descriptive of the mode, but with what followed immediately—the heavens being opened, the Spirit descending like a dove, and the approving voice, This is my beloved Son. Then, immediately afterward, without any preparation or change of clothing, Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, and to be thus tempted forty days (Matt. iv. 1, 2); “And *immediately* the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness” (Mark i. 12).

Concerning the repenting sinners who were baptized by John in Jordan, from Judea and Jerusalem, and the country around, there is not an expression indicating any *act* like immersion, nor any *preparation* for an immersion. Now, all persons know that the narration is literally true—that the baptisms were *in Jordan*, whether the parties were in the water a few *inches* or a few *feet* in depth; and when we remember that persons go *into the water* and *down into the water*, and *come up out of the water*, fifty times, at least, in the various purposes of life where it becomes necessary, where no immersion is intended or understood, to one where an immersion is practiced, and as an immersion on going into the water would be the *exception* and not the *rule*, we should always expect it to be explained, especially if it was so important as to constitute the only *exclusive mode*

of the New Testament, and to be connected with the remission of sins and the salvation of the soul.

Consider how we usually employ the expression *in*, or *into*, *the water*. The man rode his horse into the water to give him water to drink, and rode him straightway out of the water. Was either horse or rider immersed? You answer, No, the object being only to water the horse. As essential to the watering it was not necessary to have gone down into the water; this might have been done at the edge of the water, or the water might have been carried to the horse. Now, we insist that if immersion logically follows going into a river to baptize, it would as logically follow riding a horse into the water to give him water to drink, unless there is something in the word *baptize*, or *baptism*, apart from the statement of its being *in* Jordan, to prove the mode to be immersion. Again: I went down into the river and swam across to the opposite shore, and went up straightway out of the water. Here there is no immersion—none expressed, none understood; but there is all the description given that we find concerning John baptizing in Jordan. Here is the river, the going down into it, swimming across it, and going up out of the water, and not a word said that there was *no immersion*. There may have been *an immersion*, but it is not proved. Now, if life depended on it, surely it would have been stated.

5. *John baptizing in Enon*—"And John also was baptizing in Enon near to Salim, because there was *much water* there: and they came, and were baptized" (John iii. 23). If it were not for the ex-

pression "much water" in this scripture, immersionists would not see in it any proof; but that expression has raised their hopes to the discovery, as they think, of a demonstration in favor of immersion. But here, as in all other places, there is no *act* describing immersion, the statement being "they came and were baptized." This is by the same John who baptized *with* water, and we do not believe he ever changed the mode.

The expression "much water," relied on here as the gist of the argument, is one of as uncertain meaning as to *quantity* as any one that could be employed. If we stand on the banks of the Ohio River at a time when no rain has fallen for two months, we say, There is not *much water* in the river. If a careless servant, whom we direct to pour a tea-spoonful of water for the purpose of giving medicine, shall hand us a glassful, we exclaim, There is too *much water* in this glass. We have to know the *design* for which it is to be used before we can attach any clear idea to the expression "*much water*." If John had following him a crowd of self-righteous Jews who, except "*they wash, eat not*," as was their custom with their flocks and families, they would need a place like Enon, where there was *much water*, whether deep or shallow. This is the only place in the Scriptures where Enon is named, and in the original it means *springs*. In a country generally desert, these springs would be of great value to John's purposes of accommodation for a large crowd, while there was not one of them, in all probability, suitable for immersion. In the town

where the writer of this pamphlet resides is a well containing *much water*—copious in the supply, and never failing—and in the summer-time its exhaustless flow blesses all the country for miles around; but it is only a small stream, and if it were on the surface of the ground, it would not answer the purpose for a single immersion. This is all that can be said of Enon and the “much water” named. Must not a cause, professing to have a positive and explicit law of the Lord for a prescribed mode, all essential in itself, be very weak that has to rely on such an expression as is here recorded to prove immersion the only mode of baptism?

We have now seen all the strength of the argument favoring immersion as found in John’s baptisms. The New Testament has no other examples as strong. When we consider the number of people John baptized; the time he would be required to remain in the water, if he immersed; the absence of proof of any preparation; the failure to state any one act of immersion; the words of John, “I baptize *with* water;” the certainty that his baptism was like the baptism of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, both being described alike in the same words, and the latter being by *pouring*; the places where John baptized, several of them being of such a character as to exclude immersion; and the fact that, in giving the only two instances, in Jordan and in Enon, where an immersion could take place, there is not a word written to describe such a mode—we arrive safely at the conclusion that *immersion was not the mode of baptism administered by John the Baptist.*

II. *Our Lord's treatment of baptism* is to be considered next, to see if he enjoined immersion.

Surely, if immersion alone is baptism, and on it hangs either the remission of sins or the scriptural test of communion at the Supper of the Lord, we will be taught the mode by the blessed Saviour. More than all others, he desired to give us all knowledge essential to our salvation. In a public ministry of three years, he sought to teach men all necessary religious truth, and his imperative command was, "Search the Scriptures." The subject of baptism was not ignored by him, as we know that "he made and baptized more disciples than John," the act of baptism being performed by his disciples, and not by himself. (John iv. 1.) Now, we state the strangest truth, if the hypothesis that immersion alone is baptism be well founded, that has ever been presented, and it is one that will make our work on this division very brief. It is this: The Lord Jesus Christ, who was equal with the Father—seeing the end of all things from the beginning, knowing all the mistakes to which we are liable, and understanding the infinite value of immersion, if the Christians, or Disciples, are right in their views concerning it—did not in the course of his life, so far as four inspired gospel-histories testify, ever utter one sentence stating or intimating that *immersion was baptism*. If this be true, then all candid men should say, Immersion is not the only baptism. We challenge, in love, all the immersionists of the world to find one sentence spoken by our Saviour favoring immersion.

But, to be certain that we are correct, we will repeat all that Jesus said about baptism :

1. He approached John at the Jordan "to be baptized of him" (Matt. iii. 13). What he said to John we do not know, "but John forbade him" (ver. 14). Then Jesus said, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (ver. 15). This is all that he said at that time about baptism, and we know that here is no allusion to mode.

2. Again, when the chief priests and elders asked Jesus by what authority he did his great works, he asked them this question: "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" (Matt. xxi. 25.) No one can affirm that this has reference to the mode.

3. When James and John, the sons of Zebedee, asked of the Lord a certain favor, he asked them, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" (Mark x. 38.) Here no mode of baptism is named.

4. Christ's interview with Nicodemus: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John iii. 5). When we come to discuss the last question of baptism for the remission of sins, we will examine this text again. The only point made here is that there is no allusion in it to immersion.

5. Lastly, our Lord's commission: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. xxviii. 19). "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth

not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 16). In neither of these statements of the great commission is there one word referring to immersion as the mode of baptism.

We believe that the foregoing quotations contain all the recorded statements of our Lord concerning baptism. Will any immersionist say that immersion is named in either of these scriptures? Did not our Lord desire that we should understand that immersion alone is baptism, if such was his own appointment? Surely, the doctrine is not true, when we find it passed in silence by the Saviour of the world.

III. Let us examine, next, the *Epistles of Paul and Peter*, so far as they name baptism. We go to the Epistles now because they are the great exponents of *doctrine*, written under the power of inspiration, when the Church was needing instruction to guard it from error, by those masters whom God appointed to preach and write his truth; and here we will certainly find that immersion alone is baptism, if such be true.

We are asked, Why name Paul and Peter only, when John, James, and Jude all wrote divinely-inspired portions of the Scripture record? We answer, Because neither of them has named the *mode of baptism* in any Epistle. This omission is truly surprising, in the event that immersion alone is baptism, and baptism is for the remission of sins; but as both are errors, there is nothing remarkable in the fact.

In fourteen Epistles Paul named all kinds of baptism about nine times, and then only in six Epistles. Peter named the subject once. Their Epistles were written to establish the Churches in *doctrine* and *practice*—to teach all truth, and expose all falsehood. If immersion alone is baptism, these two holy men—Paul and Peter—knew it, the former having seen the Lord, and the latter having been with him during his ministry, and both having the very best opportunities to know the truth on this subject.

1. *Paul's treatment of baptism* in fourteen Epistles. In all of them he names water baptism *once*, as having taken place in his own ministry. These are his words: "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in my own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel." (1 Cor. i. 12-17.) Here we have Paul's deliverance concerning baptisms at Corinth administered by himself. In it there is not one word as to the *mode* of the baptisms. There is *one* baptism of a *household*. Without any *creed* he found *four* parties, so closely connected with baptism in their divisions that he thanked God he had baptized but a very few. Lastly, he declared he was sent to preach the gospel, and not to baptize. Now, the doctrines of

depravity, justification by faith, and the witness of the Spirit Paul preached in every sermon and wrote in every book, often giving many pages at a time on each subject. If baptism, in its mode or design, had been of equal importance, he had doubtless given it equal consideration; but he so treats the subject as to name the administration of water baptism but once, and then without any reference to *mode* or design, as shown above.

Here we notice together two expressions of Paul concerning baptism, which are necessary to the right understanding of this manner of treating the subject: "One Lord, one faith, *one baptism*." (Eph. iv. 5.) How often is this expression concerning baptism used to denote one *mode* of baptism, and that immersion. This can only be true if *water baptism* is the only kind of baptism named by Paul and other writers of the New Testament; for if there are *various kinds of baptism* named, then it is certain that the baptism named in this text is the baptism of the Spirit in the heart, as it is in immediate connection with *one Lord*, the Giver of spiritual baptism; *one faith*, the means of obtaining access to *one Lord*; and one God and Father of all, who gives life to the believer. Hear Paul naming *other baptisms* besides *water baptism*: "Of the doctrine of baptisms." (Ileb. vi. 2.) Here the word *baptisms* is in the plural, showing various kinds. What are they? "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead?" (1 Cor. xv. 29.) "Baptized unto Moses" (1 Cor. x. 2); common water baptism (1 Cor. i. 14); "baptized into death" (Rom. vi. 3). We are also

informed of a baptism of repentance, Mark i. 4; baptism of suffering, Matt. xx. 22, 23. These are sufficient; we see from them, very clearly, that neither Paul nor any of the sacred writers, when they name baptism, always meant *water baptism* in a *certain mode*, and with a *certain design*. Sometimes it is used literally, to signify *water baptism*; but it is often used *figuratively*, and more frequently to illustrate the spiritual life in the soul, by connection with Christ through faith—water baptism being always the *sign* of this great work. It is in this sense that Paul several times used *baptism*, employing such terms of description in inviting us to Christ that, by dropping the figure and construing his expressions to mean water baptism, have been made to favor the cause of immersion. With this explanation, we proceed to notice them.

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection” (Rom. vi. 3–5); “In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision *made without hands*, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh *by the circumcision of Christ*: buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God” (Col. ii. 11, 12); “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ

Jesus. For as many of you as have been *baptized into Christ* have *put on Christ*" (Gal. iii. 26, 27); "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. xii. 13).

On account of the word *buried* being twice used in the scriptures quoted from Paul, immersionists have concluded that here is proof that the term is employed to denote an *immersion in water in baptism*, as they suppose the act of baptism to be like a *burial*; but if they will read the history of burials in Paul's day, they will find that they were not made by digging into the earth a certain depth, then lowering the body, and then filling the space. A burial, literally, was putting away the body. Christ was buried in the side of a hewn rock, being laid in horizontally, and not lowered down. The idea of a body lowered about the necessary depth of water for an immersion is not necessary to the proper understanding of an ancient burial.

The texts referred to, and their contexts, will show us that in none of the quotations was Paul writing on baptism as his theme; but he was explaining, all the time, our spiritual union with Christ through faith, and baptism is employed as the figure, type, sign, or seal of being ingrafted into Christ. He tells us that we are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; that in Jesus we receive the circumcision made without hands, meaning spiritual circumcision, and employing *circumcision* as well as *baptism* in this spiritual illustration; that our baptism is into Jesus Christ, not into the water; that our burial to sin is with Christ into death, and not by

immersion ; that we are planted together—changing the figure again—in the likeness of his death, and not planted together in the water ; and that we are *baptized by one Spirit* into one body, and not baptized in water. Here are *circumcision* and *baptism*, the two ordinances appointed of God as types and seals—the first in the former, the last in the latter dispensation ; here is a burial to sin, to show that we are dead to the world ; a planting together with Christ in the likeness of his death, to show that all our life and growth are in him ; here is a resurrection from sin and death through Christ, to show that our new life is hid in him ; and here is the fruit of faith in Christ, making us to have the innocence and joy of children. The mode of baptism was never once considered by Paul in these verses. If he had aimed to demonstrate immersion as the mode of baptism, he would have done so by stating it in direct terms, and not by the figurative use of the word *buried*, employed twice in the most obvious reference, from the whole subject, to the Christian's union and identity with Christ.

Immersionists assert a positive law of Christ, plainly and authoritatively expressed, stating that immersion is the only Christian baptism. They undertake to prove this positive law by Paul. He wrote fourteen Epistles, and from these alone, if it exists, the proof can be derived. It is found in them that he uses the word *buried*, in a figurative and spiritual application of it, *twice* in connection with baptism ; but the baptism named, on examination, is found to be a spiritual baptism into Christ,

and not an immersion in water. Are we not all ready to reject a theory so weak that a positive law rests for its proof on a word figuratively employed, and that for a different purpose than the one expressed by those who advocate the positive law?

2. *Peter's statement concerning baptism*: "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. iii. 20, 21.) We may say of this statement of Peter that its testimony as to the mode of baptism proves that the eight souls saved were those who were not *immersed*, the antediluvians who were not immersed all being drowned. So Paul said of the Israelites that they were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor. x. 2). It is also said that the children of Israel, in crossing the sea at the time named walked on dry ground (Ex. xiv. 22); but Pharaoh and his host, who were all immersed following after them, were all drowned. So far, then, as these two transactions allude to mode, those saved in the ark—"the like figure whereunto baptism doth also now save us"—and the children of Israel baptized unto Moses as they crossed the sea on dry ground were not immersed, while all who were immersed were under the especial displeasure of Heaven, and were lost in the water.

IV. The *Acts of the Apostles* shall receive our last notice. We will then have examined the New Testament entire, to ascertain the strength of proof to be found in it of a *positive law* of our Lord establishing *immersion* as the only mode of Christian baptism.

This book, written by Luke, as it is believed, embraces a period of thirty years' history of the Church as it existed in the apostolic age, beginning a few days prior to the day of Pentecost. Its theme is the spread of the gospel over a large territory, the preachers who were the chief actors, the establishment of churches, the doctrines taught, and the errors repelled. In such condition of the Church, they were constantly occupying new places, where every thing would have to be repeated, the same doctrines often preached, and sacraments explained and administered. As baptism was the initiatory sacrament on entering the Church, and always had a spiritual significance as a type, or seal, in each Christian's religious state, it would be named frequently, in all probability; and if it had an exclusive mode and a place so essential as to be necessary to the forgiveness of sins, it would doubtless be explained on many occasions.

On reading this book of Church-history we find baptism named only *nine times* as having been administered. Many an immersionist will name it more than nine times in one sermon. The occasions specified in The Acts of the Apostles are the following: 1. The day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 38-41); 2. Philip at Samaria (Acts viii. 12); 3. The eunuch

(Acts viii. 38); 4. Saul (Acts ix. 18); 5. Cornelius and his house (Acts x. 48); 6. Lydia and her household (Acts xvi. 15); 7. The jailer and his house (Acts xvi. 33); 8. The Corinthians under Paul's preaching (Acts xviii. 8); 9. The twelve at Ephesus (Acts xviv. 1-7). We are thus particular in enumerating the places and occasions of baptism named in this inspired history that the reader may easily examine all of them in one view, with the question ever present to his own mind, Is there one baptism *by immersion*, or is there an *example* proving immersion with any reasonable certainty? We will now review the cases with the reader, that we may form a true conclusion.

1. *The eunuch*. This is the example mainly relied on by immersionists to demonstrate their preferred mode; and as their proof becomes weak and infrequent they become clamorous in declaring this example to be an immersion beyond dispute. Here we give the history: "And as they went on their way they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still; and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing." (Acts viii. 36-39.)

We must understand Philip's *mission* and *sermon* to the eunuch before we can decide the *mode* of the eunuch's baptism. Philip acted under a special commission: "And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south, unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, *which is desert*" (Acts viii. 26). The eunuch is not named, but the desert country into which Philip was directed to go and the route to be taken are mentioned. While on the lookout for some one needing his ministry, he found the eunuch, who had been to Jerusalem as a devout worshiper, and while returning, and sitting in his chariot, was reading the Prophet Esaias. The place he was reading was a prediction concerning Christ. (Acts viii. 32, 33.) The eunuch was unable to tell whether the prophecy referred to the prophet or to some other person. "Then Philip opened his mouth, and *began* at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus" (ver. 35). He had been invited by the eunuch into his chariot. His theme was Jesus. He *began* at the scripture named, but was not confined to it. In describing Christ's work in saving the Church, he found in Isaiah, immediately preceding the account of the Lord's humiliation, which the eunuch was reading, an expression that very naturally led him to speak of baptism: the expression was, "So shall he *sprinkle* many nations" (Isa. lii. 15).

With what reverence and awe did the eunuch hear Philip tell the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ! and when he considered that he was so near the city where the Lord was tried, and

the place where he was crucified, and that so few years had elapsed since the event, his heart believed on Jesus with all its trust and love. To belong to the Church of Christ, and to receive membership under the preacher who had so unexpectedly preached Jesus to him, and to be baptized, were all suggestions of his mind as soon as the various subjects became plain. Riding along, they came to a certain water—the first they had probably seen in traveling many miles, and the last they might see during the day. The eunuch, fearing that Philip might pass it unnoticed, exclaimed, “See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” They were not in a church, and had made no preparation for baptism; but they had the love of the blessed Redeemer as the theme, and the prophecy, “So shall he sprinkle many nations,” suggesting baptism and its mode. Commanding the chariot to stop, and both alighting from it, Philip proceeded to baptize the eunuch. How? This is the inquiry. The main fact to be observed in the description is that the very same things occurred to Philip and the eunuch, except *the baptizing*. Taking King James’s version as the best in the world, and not regarding the prejudices of the men who made it, all, or nearly all, of whom favored immersion, as is seen by their frequent translations of *into* where *to* would be proper, we proceed to notice the account: First, both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, neither having the advantage of distance or depth, and probably not going beyond the edge of a very inconsiderable stream. Second, they both together came up out

of the water—both alike, and there being no difference in any one particular. With the water Philip baptized the eunuch, and the latter went on his way rejoicing. He knew that Isaiah had said of Christ, “So shall he sprinkle many nations;” and from the scriptures named Philip preached Christ, and explained to him the duty of baptism. Ezekiel had said in the same way concerning Christ, but applying it more literally, but not more truly, to water baptism: “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean” (Ezek. xxxvi. 25).

Here is the proof relied on for immersion in The Acts of the Apostles. Excepting this one instance, there is not another which has the least probability, from the description given, that immersion was the mode. And will this instance support the assumption, in any fair mind, that by it a *positive and plain* law is established? Can it be said that immersion is proved by this case? The baptizer and the baptized went together into the water, and came together out of the water—how many inches, or feet, we are not told; but the place was desert, and the water was named by the eunuch apparently to attract attention, and while they were together in the water Philip baptized him. How? Answer: By affusion, as predicted by both Isaiah and Ezekiel.

2. If any of the other examples named can favor immersion, it will be the baptism of Lydia. She and her household were baptized on the Sabbath-day by a river-side (Acts xvi. 13–15). Paul was in the city of Philippi staying certain days, and on the Sabbath-day he went out of the city by a river-side,

where prayer was wont to be made, and there he sat down and spoke unto the women which resorted thither. Now, be it carefully noted that there was not a person present, either the preacher or the women, who went on that day to the river, or the river-side, to baptize or to be baptized. They were not there as a company of immersionists, designedly to find water and a place suitable for immersion. The preachers went there to *pray* and to *preach Christ*. Under the influence of such prayers and preaching, the Lord opened Lydia's heart, and she attended to the things which were spoken by Paul. As the result of her receiving Christ on that day, she and her household were baptized. We say, without the fear of contradiction, that here the river-side is named as the place where prayer was wont to be made, and not as a place where a baptism was ever before administered.

Except in the instances of the baptism of the eunuch and of Lydia and her household, there is not another baptism in The Acts of the Apostles which was administered outside of a *house*, and usually they were in a *city*; and there was never a single instance of preparation made for baptism in any *house, church, city, desert, river-side*, or other place. All such arrangements as baptisteries, and the like, are of modern date, started for convenience, and for the sake of decency, in the support of immersion.

3. In Acts xix. 1-7 we have an account of the baptism of twelve persons. The place was the city of Ephesus. They were the disciples of

John. What a strange question, in the ears of a modern Christian, or Disciple, was that which Paul asked them: "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" It would seem that on the subject of the Spirit's influence on the heart they had heard such preaching as the new Church furnishes to its audiences, for they said, "We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost." Then Paul said, "Unto what then were ye baptized?" What significance is there in a baptism which is the sign and seal of regeneration, if it has no reference to the Holy Spirit that regenerates? Then, after proper instruction, Paul commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. There is not a word indicating that the mode was immersion.

4. Paul was preaching in the city of Corinth, in the house of Justus, which joined hard to the synagogue (Acts xviii. 7). Here "Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord, with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized" (ver. 8). Can any one believe that these baptisms in the city of Corinth, and in the house of Justus, or in the synagogue adjoining his house, were by immersion? We affirm, There is not a vestige of proof to sustain this assumption.

5. "Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them" (Acts viii. 5); "And there was great joy in that city" (ver. 8); "They were baptized, both men and women" (ver. 12); "And when Simon was baptized, he continued with

Philip" (ver. 13). Here there is no expression favoring immersion.

6. Peter was preaching in the house of Cornelius (Acts x. 24). Cornelius lived in Cesarea. An audience assembled and heard the preaching, but no one left the house. It was the first sermon to the Gentiles. All the hearers were brought under conviction by the Holy Spirit (ver. 44). Then, on their profession of faith, Peter said, "Can any man *forbid water*, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (verses 47, 48). Was there an immersion of that audience in the house of Cornelius on that day? Never! "Can any man *forbid water* being brought to these people for the purpose of baptizing them?" was his meaning, and not, "Can any man forbid our leaving the house of Cornelius to find water to immerse the converts?"

7. *The Jailer*.—Paul and Silas were in Philippi, a chief city of Macedonia. They were in jail, and at the hour of midnight were praying and singing praises to God (Acts xvi. 25). The keeper of the prison was brought under conviction for his sins, and asked, "What must I do to be saved?" The answer came, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house" (verses 30, 31). The jailer believed, "And the same hour of the night he was baptized, he and all his straight-way" (ver. 33). At midnight, in the prison, the jailer and his family—in the sight and hearing of all the prisoners, and in a city where every going in

and out of a jail in the night would attract attention—were baptized. These are the facts. Will any one conclude that the jailer and his family were immersed? If they do, it is the desire that it should be so, and not the proof that it was so, which causes the decision.

8. *Saul*.—He was baptized in the city of Damascus, in the house of Judas, the house being situated on the street called Straight (Acts ix. 11; also, ver. 18). He had been fasting and praying three days, and, being very weak, as soon as he was baptized he received meat and was strengthened (ver. 19). Ananias was the name of the preacher who baptized him. Hear the description of his baptism: “And *arose*, and was baptized” (ver. 18). He had strength sufficient to stand up in the house and be baptized. How? By affusion of water, and not by immersion. There is not the shadow of probability that immersion was the mode.

9. *The Day of Pentecost*.—Here we have the first preaching of the gospel to the Jews after the crucifixion of Christ. Among them were the guilty men who had murdered Jesus. The whole case was peculiar, and required the clearest and strongest statement that immersion was the only baptism, if such were true, for the persons addressed were strangers and enemies. They were not in a position to know any thing about Christian modes, and but little about its doctrines.

There were about one hundred and twenty persons, including preachers and disciples, assembled together immediately preceding and on the day of

Pentecost (Acts i. 15). Part of the number were women (ver. 14). They were abiding in an *upper room*, in a *house*, and in the *city* of Jerusalem, where they held a protracted prayer-meeting (verses 13, 14). To distinguish the preachers, who baptized, from the disciples, both men and women, who did not baptize, the preachers are named (ver. 13). While in this condition, they chose an apostle, Matthias, to take the place of Judas, making exactly twelve apostles (ver. 26). Before this choice was made, Peter delivered a discourse to them, and part of it was concerning the baptism of John (ver. 22). John's baptism had been named in the same chapter as having been administered *with water* (ver. 5), and the day of Pentecost, just approaching, as the fulfillment of the prophecy by Joel of the Lord's spiritual baptism *with the Holy Ghost*, which Joel said should be *by pouring* (Acts ii. 17).

On the day of Pentecost, which followed the preceding events in a few days, and in the same *city* and *place*, *three thousand persons* were baptized (Acts ii. 41). Such a number baptized in one day was unknown in history, except the baptizing of the children of Israel, as they walked through the sea on dry ground. We are asked to believe that the twelve preachers named *immersed* on that day these three thousand souls. Let us study the question.

“When the day of Pentecost was fully come”—in the morning of the day, and in the house where the one hundred and twenty were assembled—“there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they

were sitting" (Acts ii. 2). We know, therefore, that the apostles and disciples were at that time not only in the *city* of Jerusalem, but also in a *certain house*. Then the baptism of the Holy Ghost followed (verses 3, 4), and immediately the discovery was made that all the disciples, whether learned or unlearned, could speak in any *language then known*. Jerusalem was then represented by every nation under heaven (ver. 5). Such a display of gifts was noised abroad, and the people of the city and strangers, including all the nationalities, began to assemble to see and hear the disciples. They began to discuss among themselves the cause of such great power. Some said, "These men are full of new wine" (ver. 13). At this juncture, it being nine o'clock in the morning, Peter began his discourse concerning Jesus Christ, and his claims to the Messiahship: his life, his crucifixion, and all the facts necessary to convince his audience, who were strangers and unbelievers, of the truth of his assertions. How long he preached we do not know. It was evident that the miracles, the zeal of the Christians, and the sermon, made an impression unequalled. Men began boldly to acknowledge their belief in the truths preached by Peter, and to inquire, "Men and brethren, what shall we do" (Acts ii. 37)? Then the crowd began to join the Church. This would be done by experience, confession, examination of character, or in some other way that would require time.

Here we call attention again to the number who joined the Church and were baptized on that day.

The number was three thousand. According to the shortest mode of receiving members that any of us have ever witnessed, how long time would be necessary for that number, on examination of character, or in any other way, to be received? It would certainly require several hours' time. In the county of Jessamine, and State of Kentucky, where the writer lives, there are about twenty-two hundred voters. It is a closely settled population, the county extending twenty miles from east to west, and fifteen miles from north to south. Now, it would be necessary to add eight hundred voters to the number in this county to make as many persons as joined the Church and were baptized on the day of Pentecost. In a single county, to take the vote in one day, where the clerk does no more than to write the name and record the vote, it is found necessary to have a number of voting-places. We are trying to make impressive the great number who joined the Church and were baptized on the day named, and the time necessary to be employed.

After the sermon, and the reception of three thousand members, the question of baptism came next. If they were all to be immersed, would it not require considerable time to disperse, make preparation of suitable clothing, and meet again? Some lived close to the house where the preaching was heard, and some farther away. Or, will any one be bold enough to affirm that the three thousand persons—men, women, and children—went with the apostles to some suitable place, and were immersed, and left in their clothes saturated with

water? Will any one assert that the crowd of enemies and strangers who joined the Church on the day of Pentecost, and were baptized, went to the place with the design of joining, and prepared to be immersed? It seems evident that the sermon, the receiving of three thousand members, and the preparation for immersion, would take at least one entire day. We know no *preparation* is named, and the reason is, no immersion took place. But, if no preparation was named, did any of us ever know or hear of an immersion where there was no preparation? In all that we have ever seen, there was preparation made for the immersion.

Supposing, however, that at some reasonable hour of the day the three thousand were ready to leave the house where Peter preached, and go forth to be immersed—where would they go? Every pool, creek, or other place where there was sufficient water, was in the possession of enemies; but if they had all been in the hands of friends, where, we ask, in the city of Jerusalem, could places be found for the immersion of such a crowd? There were two hundred and fifty persons to be baptized by each apostle, if they divided them equally. All could not immerse in one place at the same time. We believe, if they had been immediately on the bank of a river, to have found room and conveniences for so many immersions, that quite a distance would have to be traveled along the river; but they did not leave the house, so far as we are informed. We are bound, then, to conclude that no immersion took place.

We have given the whole history of the New Testament on the subject of baptism, to ascertain on what authority *exclusive immersion* rests. On no other authority than this: John the Baptist, part of the time, baptized *in a river with water*; and he also baptized *with water* in the *country* around Jordan, in *Bethabara*, and in a place where *Jesus abode*. He also baptized in Enon, a place of springs, because there was much water there. The eunuch and the preacher who baptized him both went down into the water, and came up out of the water; Lydia and her household were baptized on a river-side. Paul said, "We are buried with Christ by baptism into *death*"—not into water. From all this it is asserted by immersionists that there is a positive law for immersion; but in it all there is, truly, no proof to support the assumption.

On the other side, we ascertain that John the Baptist always baptized with water; that it was likened to the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which was by pouring; that sprinkling was predicted by two prophets—Isaiah and Ezekiel—and that the eunuch was baptized under a sermon in which Isaiah must have been quoted, using the words, "So shall he sprinkle many nations;" that our Lord, in all his teachings, never spoke one word favoring immersion; that all the baptisms which took place in the first thirty years' history, excepting two instances—the eunuch and Lydia—were in *cities* and *houses*, there being no preparation made for baptism, and under circumstances where immersion could not take place. We leave the reader to decide

whether the New Testament teaches that immersion is the only baptism, and we pray the blessing of God in leading him to the truth.

V. The doctrine that *the remission of past sins* takes place only in baptism shall now receive our consideration.

No subject connected with the salvation of men has been presented in the Bible with more frequency, or greater clearness, than the remission of sins. It is essential to the sinner's life, and whatever the agency may be through which a man "dead in trespasses and sins" may live and be holy, divine revelation will explain it with unmistakable clearness. The Christians, or Disciples, contend, erroneously, as we will show beyond a doubt, that the sinner is pardoned only in the act of baptism. Hear Mr. Campbell, their greatest expounder of Scripture: "I proceed to show that we have the most explicit proof that God forgives sins for the name's sake of his Son, or when the *name* of Jesus Christ is named upon us *in immersion*; that *in* and *by* the act of immersion, *so soon* as our bodies are put *under the water*, at that very instant, our former or old sins are all *washed away*: provided, only, that we are true believers. I am bold to affirm that every one of them who, in the belief of what the apostle spoke, was immersed, did, in the *very instant* in which he was put under water, receive the *forgiveness of his sins*, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. If so, then who will not concur with me in saying that Christian immersion is the *gospel in water*?"

("Christian Baptism," pp. 416, 417.) After giving these paragraphs from Mr. Campbell, it is certain that we are not misleading the reader in stating the views of this Church.

The Holy Scripture, and particularly the New Testament, explains *Christ's law for the pardon of sins* to be by *faith in him*, and that not a few times only, but hundreds of times; but it is well known that every error has some show of plausibility, by quotations of Scripture either detached from other parts or distorted in their meaning—so the error which we are now considering has in the New Testament just *four* passages on which a hope may be hung that the remission of sins takes place only in baptism. We proceed to examine them.

1. Our Saviour's interview with Nicodemus has an expression relied on to prove that remission of sins takes place only in baptism: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John iii. 5.)

Whether this refers to water baptism is by no means certain. It may be used only to make strong the impression on the mind of Nicodemus, through the figure of water employed, always emblematical of the Spirit's influence, to show the necessity and nature of the new birth. And this looks more probable when we remember that, in the entire interview between our Lord and Nicodemus, *water* is not named elsewhere. It is quite strange that when there is not a word preceding or following this verse on the subject of water baptism that our Lord, if he meant, as our opponents contend, that water bap-

tism was as essential to salvation as the Holy Spirit, would allow Nicodemus to come and go with only a hint as to his duty—the duty not being pressed on him at the time. More than this, our opponents inform us that Christian baptism was not instituted until the day of Pentecost, nearly three years after this interview. How, then, could the baptism of Nicodemus prove the design of Christian baptism?

But, supposing that our Lord meant water baptism, we remark that the subject is capable of an easy explanation, on the hypothesis that salvation is by faith in Christ. The only fair rule of interpretation of any single passage in a discourse on a disputed question is to compare the passage with the rest of the discourse. With this rule before us, we find that Jesus, in the same discourse, said, “He that *believeth* on him is not condemned.” (John iii. 18.) Now, if this be true, the believer is acquitted, or forgiven, the moment that he believes on Jesus; for if he is not condemned, he must be pardoned, and hence he is *forgiven when* he believes and *before* he is baptized. Hence the construction of the passage, that in the very instant a man is immersed he is born of water and his sins are forgiven, is an error.

But let us notice our Lord’s subject and his treatment of it while addressing the Jewish ruler. The subject was, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John iii. 3). He made clear and impressive the *power* by which the new birth is effected, being the Holy Spirit, and the *means* by which that power is secured, being faith

in Christ. The whole subject of the new birth was mysterious to Nicodemus. To make it as plain as possible, the Lord, in the discourse, used *three figures*—two to show the influence of the Spirit, and one to show the saving nature of faith in Christ. To encourage Nicodemus to believe on the Lord, so that he might be born again through faith in Christ, was shown by this figure: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John iii. 14, 15). Nicodemus, being a Jewish ruler, would remember in the Old Testament Scriptures the history of the Israelites bitten by fiery serpents in the wilderness on account of their disobedience to God, and their being healed by *only looking* on a brazen serpent erected by Moses, and typical of Christ. Nothing could be more convincing to suggest to him the nature and power of faith in Christ to save the soul. But here baptism for the remission of sins is not mentioned—faith in Christ is the cause assigned for the blessing of pardon.

Having shown Nicodemus, by direct statement several times repeated in the discourse, and by the figure named, that faith was the only condition required of him to secure eternal life, he also as conclusively taught him that the Spirit of the Lord was the power which imparted the new life. In John iii. 8 Christ informed Nicodemus, “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the

Spirit." Here the figure is employed, and the use of it is explained. We are not left to any inference. Nothing is more certain or more mysterious than the wind. Feeling its power, we know not its source, only that it comes from God. So of the Spirit; it gives life to the dead, but no one perceives or understands the process. Then, for the same purpose, he uses the figure of the text, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." On our globe, water is the cleansing element; in baptism, it is the sign of purity and regeneration. These three illustrations would throw light on the dark mind of the Jewish ruler on the subject of the new birth, teaching him that the *power of life* is in the Spirit of God—the agency through which we live is *faith in Christ*.

2. The commission of our Lord: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark xvi. 16).

The construction placed on these words by the new Church is that the Saviour meant that salvation was connected with baptism the instant the baptism took place, and not at any other time. This is not his meaning. He did not say, "He that believeth and is baptized *is* saved," which is the interpretation Mr. Campbell gives it, as appears from the fact developed in the passages read from him, that the sinner is saved instantly in the very act of being baptized. Jesus said, "He *shall be* saved;" Mr. C. said "He *is* saved." The Lord concluded, "He that believeth not *shall be* damned," and not that he *is* damned.

Now, the following is the true explanation: The Lord appointed two sacraments—the Supper, by which to recognize and remember his broken body and shed blood, and baptism, placed at the door of the Church, and to be the emblem of regeneration. The commission could not be misleading to any one who would remember and believe that our Lord had said, “Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John iii. 15). He said again, “Thy faith hath saved thee” (Luke vii. 50). Many statements of our Saviour could be quoted, showing that he always taught that we are saved by faith in him, and not through any act of our own.

3. The next passage relied on to prove that remission of sins takes place only in baptism is a remark made by Peter on the day of Pentecost. He had before him a crowd of Jews who had publicly denied and crucified Jesus Christ, but who were now penitent. They asked him what they must do. Their case was peculiar. They were very guilty. Such an answer as Peter gave them neither he nor any other apostle ever gave to any other persons. What he desired was to have as public an acknowledgment of Christ as the denial and crucifixion had been public. He said to them, “Repent, and *be baptized* every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts ii. 38). The baptism was to be the public acknowledgment of Jesus before the world. But the Christians, or Disciples, contend that, because the words “be baptized for the remission of sins” are used, the meaning is, In the

very act of immersion, and instantly, and at no other time or place, before or after baptism, the remission of sins takes place. Now, this cannot be true, when it is clear that the word "for" in the scripture may mean *because* of the remission of sins which has taken place, or in *order to* the remission of sins that will take place. But it will not answer the purpose of our opponents to make the word *for* refer to either *past* or *future* time. It is *present time*, and the pardon of sins only in immersion, that they require to support their theory, and one so effectual that when a person rises from the water he is as pure as an angel. ("Campbell and McCalla Debate," p. 137.) So the word "for," to suit the theory advocated, must have a meaning as to time so definite that only the present moment is embraced.

The courts of law apply the rule of construction to a will, or deed, or other written instrument, where some word or sentence is of doubtful meaning, that the whole document shall be examined in removing the doubt. Now, here is a statement of Peter which is understood by different persons in a different sense. One party contends that he teaches the doctrine that in the *very act of immersion* the person baptized is pardoned, the immersion being as essential to the pardon as *faith in Christ* is essential. The other side contends that the persons addressed had been enemies to Christ, having denied and murdered him; that baptism is named because these penitent Jews, formerly unbelievers and murderers, are to be received into the Church, it being at the door of the Church, and the emblem of spiritual purification,

and that the expression "*for the remission of sins*" does not necessarily mean that sins will be remitted *only in baptism*, as by its plain and obvious sense it may refer to *past* or *future* time. To make this view more certainly correct, we remark that Peter preached *only Christ* and *faith in Christ*, not naming baptism until the moment arrived when he was to receive the penitents into the Church. It is evident that their conviction for sin and faith in Christ were produced, under the sermon, without any reference to baptism. So the two parties stand in opposition of belief as to the meaning of the expression "*for the remission of sins.*" How may the question be decided? The most certain way to reach the truth is to examine the same preacher and writer, and ascertain what he said at other times. He lived to be the first preacher who offered the gospel to the Gentiles, a few years after the day of Pentecost, in the house of Cornelius; to preach many times in many places; to be a faithful witness for the Lord, and to write two Epistles under divine inspiration. But, in all that he said and wrote after the day of Pentecost, he never made another such statement as the one made to the Jews, as he never had another audience similarly guilty, and to whom precisely similar instruction was proper.

Let us see what he taught at other times concerning the remission of sins, that we may know whether baptism was connected with pardon. Two passages will suffice as containing the doctrine uniformly taught by him: "Receiving the *end of your faith*, even the salvation of your souls" (1 Pet.

i. 9); "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever *believeth in him shall receive remission of sins*" (Acts x. 43). It is certain that, if either of these scriptures be true, remission of sins is by faith in Christ. If it is by faith in Christ, then baptism is not essential to the remission of sins. The first text quoted above was written by Peter about nineteen years after the last-named text was spoken to Cornelius and his friends. The sermon to Cornelius and his friends was delivered about eight years after the day of Pentecost. It is certainly true, therefore, that if Peter uniformly taught, for twenty-seven years at least after the text in dispute was spoken, that remission of sins was by *faith in Christ*, he could not mean to teach on the day of Pentecost, as a truth to be believed by men in all future time, that there is no remission of sins except in immersion. Therefore, we safely conclude that this famous text does not teach the doctrine of the *pardon of sins in baptism alone*, as maintained by the Christians, or Disciples.

Before we leave this point, we wish to state a fact for careful consideration. Mr. Campbell expressed the theory of this new Church, in a passage already quoted from him, when he said that the *remission of sins* and the *gift of the Holy Spirit* are both received for the first time in baptism. (See "Christian Baptism," pp. 416, 417.) The theory is, No prayer before baptism; no remission of sins before baptism; and no spiritual influence before baptism. The order is, Baptism, then prayer; baptism, then pardon; baptism, then the Holy Spirit. But ob-

serve the difference between them and Peter: he asserted, in the plainest words, that Cornelius and his friends received the Holy Ghost *before* baptism (Acts x. 47); Paul *prayed*, and he received the commendation of Heaven *before* baptism (Acts ix. 11); Peter preached faith in Christ for the remission of sins *before* baptism (Acts x. 43). What shall we think of a theory so opposed to the teachings of the word of God?

4. *The Baptism of Saul*.—"And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts xxii. 16). If we keep in mind the fact that water baptism is the *sign of regeneration*, we shall have no difficulty in understanding the meaning of Paul when he connected baptism with calling on the name of the Lord, through which name his sins were washed away by faith in Christ—baptism being the sign, the Holy Spirit being the power. In proof that the baptism of Saul was not necessarily the connecting link in the pardon of his sins, we find that when Ananias baptized him no such allusion was made (Acts ix. 17, 18). In the text under examination, Paul was relating his experience and conversion to the chief captain and to an excited people from the stairs of the castle in the city of Jerusalem—the violence being so great that he had been unmercifully beaten. In the course of his address he named baptism, as stated in the text, in connection with his calling on the name of the Lord in prayer, so as to show to these enemies and strangers his religious convic-

tion, experience, and manner of uniting with the Church.

In the four passages of Scripture quoted lies all the proof afforded in the New Testament to the Christians, or Disciples, to support their theory that the remission of past sins is found only in baptism. We have seen how easily they are explained to harmonize with the remission of sins by faith in Christ, as soon as we understand the place and design of baptism, which we have shown to be the sign of regeneration, and the entrance into the Church of Christ, by a profession of his name.

VI. It might be sufficient to add, in refutation of the theory held by this Church, that the New Testament writers uniformly and repeatedly assert that the remission of past sins is by faith in Christ; but to make this very evident to the reader, we here note some proofs and reasons against the system which teaches that remission of sins is only in immersion.

1. If the *remission of sins* were *only in baptism*, Paul would not have made the statements concerning baptism that he made, as recorded in 1 Cor. i. 14-17. This great apostle, and preacher, and writer, certainly knew, if it were true, that apart from baptism there was no remission of sins; but hear what he affirms: 1. He was *sent* to preach the gospel. 2. He was *not sent* to baptize. 3. He had baptized but *very few*—Crispus and Gaius, and the household of Stephanas—and did not know whether he had baptized any other. 4. He thanked God that he had

not baptized any more of the people to whom he was writing. All these statements are irreconcilable with the idea that on baptism hangs the sinner's life—the pardon of his sins. No preacher of the new Church ever thanked God that he baptized only a few persons; on the contrary, their boasting is that numbers have been immersed by them for the remission of sins.

2. The *mercy of God*, in offering the forgiveness of sins to the world, is limited by this theory to a *single moment* in each man's life. In the very *act of immersion* the sinner is to be pardoned. Neither before that moment nor without that act is there any promise of forgiveness, according to this Church; but in all the Scriptures no truth is more evident than the prolonged mercy and forbearance of God toward erring men. We cannot think it necessary to quote scriptures in proof of the position that the Lord is not willing that any should perish; that he is very pitiful, and of tender mercy; and that he desires not the death of a sinner. Every reader knows this is the teaching of the Bible. Any theory that opposes this teaching is untrue. A theory that limits the pardon of past sins to one act and one moment of a sinner's life does confine the mercy of God to that one act and moment, and is, therefore, in conflict with so many scriptures that it must be erroneous.

3. But this theory is still more objectionable. Three things—*faith*, *repentance*, and *immersion*—have to meet in the same *moment*, or the sinner remains unpardoned. Baptism is to be administered

but once, the Supper often. If a man, then, according to this theory, should be destitute of repentance or faith when he was immersed, he could never afterward be pardoned. When he joined the Church, he was not asked a question about his repentance. The sermon had probably been a tirade against other Churches, and his faith may have been more in the supposed evils existing in them than in Christ. What an important moment it must be in his life! Faith in Christ, repentance toward God, and immersion for the remission of sins, must all exist and unite in that one moment, or the man is lost, if the theory be true; but, thank God, it is an error! Many of the membership of this Church have gone far beyond its definitions, and, having a faith of the heart that trusts and loves Christ, are born again, while millions who never adopted this theory are saved by faith in that blood which "speaketh better things than the blood of Abel."

4. If the doctrine that remission of past sins takes place only in baptism be true, then our Lord must have *two laws* of pardon in the life of each man: one when he is baptized, which is faith, repentance, and immersion conjoined; and the other for the pardon of sins committed after baptism; but of what the last law consists we cannot tell. In all ages there has never been but one law for the pardon of sins. By *faith* Abel, in the beginning of the world, offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain; Abraham "*believed* God, and it was counted to him for righteousness;" Paul testified "that we are *justified by faith*, and have peace with God through our

Lord Jesus Christ." Now, with Abel before the flood, and Abraham after the flood, and Paul after the coming of Christ; and, according to all other Scripture testimony, there was never but one law for the pardon of sins, and that law was *faith in Christ*. We are, then, opposing an *error* when it is asserted that the remission of sins is found in immersion alone.

5. The very *mode* of the sacrament, in which it is claimed that the remission of sins takes place, has been in dispute in the Christian world ever since *immersion* was first named. The best scholars and the best men have been unable to find immersion taught in the Bible; hence, their practice of baptism has not been by this mode. Would our Lord make a law for the remission of sins, on which the eternal destiny of each man depends, expressed in such words that neither the *mode* prescribed nor the *design* of the ordinance could be understood even by the learned portion of mankind, and limit the pardon of sins by this law to a single moment in the life of each person? And of those who have been *immersed* in the past centuries, how few *designed the act* for the remission of sins! There is not a Baptist, we suppose, in America or England, or in any other country, except the modern sect calling themselves Christians, or Disciples, who supposed for a moment that in the act of immersion his sins would be remitted. Query: Will sins be remitted in immersion without intending it? Surely, the theory is wrong where so many glaring contradictions and difficulties exist.

6. We urge, as a most convincing objection to the theory opposed, that millions of men who have lived the most holy lives, and dying without immersion, can have no promise of heaven, if the system held by this Church be true, unless our Lord is constantly violating his own law to accommodate the perverseness or stupidity of men, that he may save them. Many, again, die in such circumstances that they could not be immersed. The soldier on the field of battle, the sailor on the ocean, the sick on the bed of death, and the traveler in the desert, where there is neither water nor preacher—possibly perpetual snow and ice—may be named as only a few instances of this kind. Are all these lost? If the theory be true that remission of sins takes place only in baptism, they are lost, unless the law of pardon is broken in every instance. We are bold to affirm that our Saviour never violated his own law to save any man, since the world began. His law is now, and has ever been, “He that believeth not shall be damned,” and he will execute it. His law is now, and has ever been, “He that *believeth* is not condemned,” and his grace and Spirit will give the blessing promised. But the theory named makes hopeless and helpless vast multitudes of the human family, while Christ’s easy term of *faith in himself* makes a way of access to life for every condition, place, and character. We remember, in our early ministry, a druggist whose wife was a member of this new Church. He was a wicked sinner, and while absent from home, purchasing goods, became dangerously ill. At once he turned his attention to

his soul. He could not be immersed. By faith he sought and found Christ as his Saviour, and died happy, assured that his sins were pardoned. In the absence of the preacher of the Church to which his widow belonged, we preached a discourse before he was buried. We showed how he was saved by the law of Christ if he had trusted him with all his heart before he died, at the same time discouraging all sinners from postponing their repentance until the last sickness. Never shall we forget the gratitude of that widow for the comforting truths of the gospel presented on that occasion. But if her preacher had delivered the discourse, he could not have spoken a word of hope, except to suggest that Christ might save the deceased by the violation of his own law.

7. Lastly, we design to introduce *five witnesses*, affording conclusive proof that the *remission of sins is by faith in Christ*: 1. *John the Baptist*—"He that *believeth on the Son* hath everlasting life" (John iii. 36). 2. *Jesus the Saviour*—"For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever *believeth in him* should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). 3. *Peter, the day-of-Pentecost preacher*—"To him give all the prophets witness that *through his name* whosoever *believeth in him* shall receive remission of sins" (Acts x. 43). 4. *Paul*.—"For by grace are ye saved *through faith*, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, *not of works*, lest any man should boast" (Eph. ii. 8, 9). 5. *John the Apostle*—"He that *believeth on the Son of God* hath the witness in himself" (1 John v. 10).

Here are five witnesses affirming that sins are remitted by *faith in Christ*. They are no less personages than John the Baptist, who represented one entire dispensation immediately preceding Christ; our Lord, the Redeemer of man; Peter, who first preached the gospel, after Christ's crucifixion, to the Jews and to the Gentiles; Paul, the great preacher and writer; and John the Apostle, and the disciple whom Jesus loved. In all the New Testament there is not one sentence stating the remission of sins to be in connection with *faith, repentance, and baptism*. Returning and reading the verse relied on by the theorists of the new Church, where our Lord addressed Nicodemus, we shall see that *water* alone is named, but *faith* and *repentance* are not named. In the commission, *belief* and *baptism* are named, but there is no mention of *repentance*. Peter, on the day of Pentecost, in his famous address to the Jews and strangers, named *repentance* and *baptism*, but did not name *faith* in the passage on which the new Church so confidently relies. Paul, in relating his experience already quoted, named *baptism*, but omitted *faith* and *repentance*. So we see that the basis on which the new Church is built—*faith, repentance, and immersion* for the remission of sins—has never once been stated in the Scriptures as a trio appearing together. But to refuse to believe the five authorities, which we have shown to prove that the remission of sins is by faith in Christ, will require an unusual degree of boldness, as their statements are unequivocal, and they teach the doctrine maintained by us, beyond a doubt.

If we are told that the new Church requires *faith*, *repentance*, and *immersion* in the remission of sins, and that other Churches look for the remission of sins in *faith alone*, and, therefore, they have all that others require, and more, we reply that the difference is in the understanding of the parties concerning the *nature of faith*. The Christians, or Disciples, mean by faith that it is simply the *belief of testimony*, and in making the good confession, and joining the Church; it means the *belief of the fact that Jesus is the Messiah*. Nearly all persons who are in any Church have had this faith from their earliest recollection. The degree or extent of their faith, in mind or heart, was not changed in the least by uniting with the Church and professing religion. But the faith which saves the soul is not only "the *evidence* of things not seen;" it is also "the *substance* of things hoped for." (Heb. xi. 1.) It not only *perceives* that Christ is the Messiah, but it *receives* him as then saving the believer. It is the faith of the *heart* as well as of the *mind*. The mourner seeking Christ by this faith prays for the blessing of pardoned sins in the *act of believing*; the believer in the new theory does not pray, but expects pardon only in baptism. The five witnesses named spoke of saving faith as being in the *Son of God*; not in the *fact* that he was the Messiah, but in the fact that, being the Messiah, his promises are realized in a present and full salvation. To this the heart responds with all its power of trust and love; for it is "with *the heart* that man believeth unto righteousness." Rom. x. 10. The theory of the new Church,

making immersion essential to pardon, with faith and repentance, gives but this one moment of life, when baptism is administered, to receive forgiveness; but the Scriptures, teaching that pardon is by faith in Christ, allows the whole period of life as a time for repentance and return to God.

Our work is done. The reader must judge whether the peculiar views and doctrines of the Church called the Christians, or Disciples, are true or erroneous. In the fear of God, we believe they are errors of a nature so pernicious that the soul is imperiled by embracing them; hence we oppose them, *hating* the false doctrines set forth, but loving and praying for all who hold these views.

And now, dear reader, fellow-traveler to eternity, as we part let me inquire, Are you a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus? Is your whole life hid with Christ in God? Are you pardoned? and have you become a new creature in the Lord? Consider how soon we shall pass into the eternal state. Then we shall be judged by all the deeds done in the body. The passing hours to-day will tell on our happiness or misery during the unnumbered years of eternity. Christ is offered to you to-day, without money and without price. He tasted death for every man, and asks you to trust him that you may live. Why will ye die? is the pealing note of interrogation from heaven, which has sounded in the ears of men for many centuries. Never stop short of Christ in seeking the salvation of your soul. Trust neither prayer, nor baptism, nor alms, nor good works of any kind,

but in Jesus alone seek to find the pearl of great price. All obedience will be easy and plain if you love the Lord. Let Christ be unto you wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Think of your impure heart; think of his spotless purity; then go to him, saying,

“In my hand no price I bring;
Simply to thy Cross I cling!”

May your mind and heart receive and own the truth in the love of it; may you find that “to live is Christ, and to die is gain;” and may you enjoy, after death, “the rest that remaineth to the people of God.”

THE END.

CHRISTIANS, OR DISCIPLES.

BY

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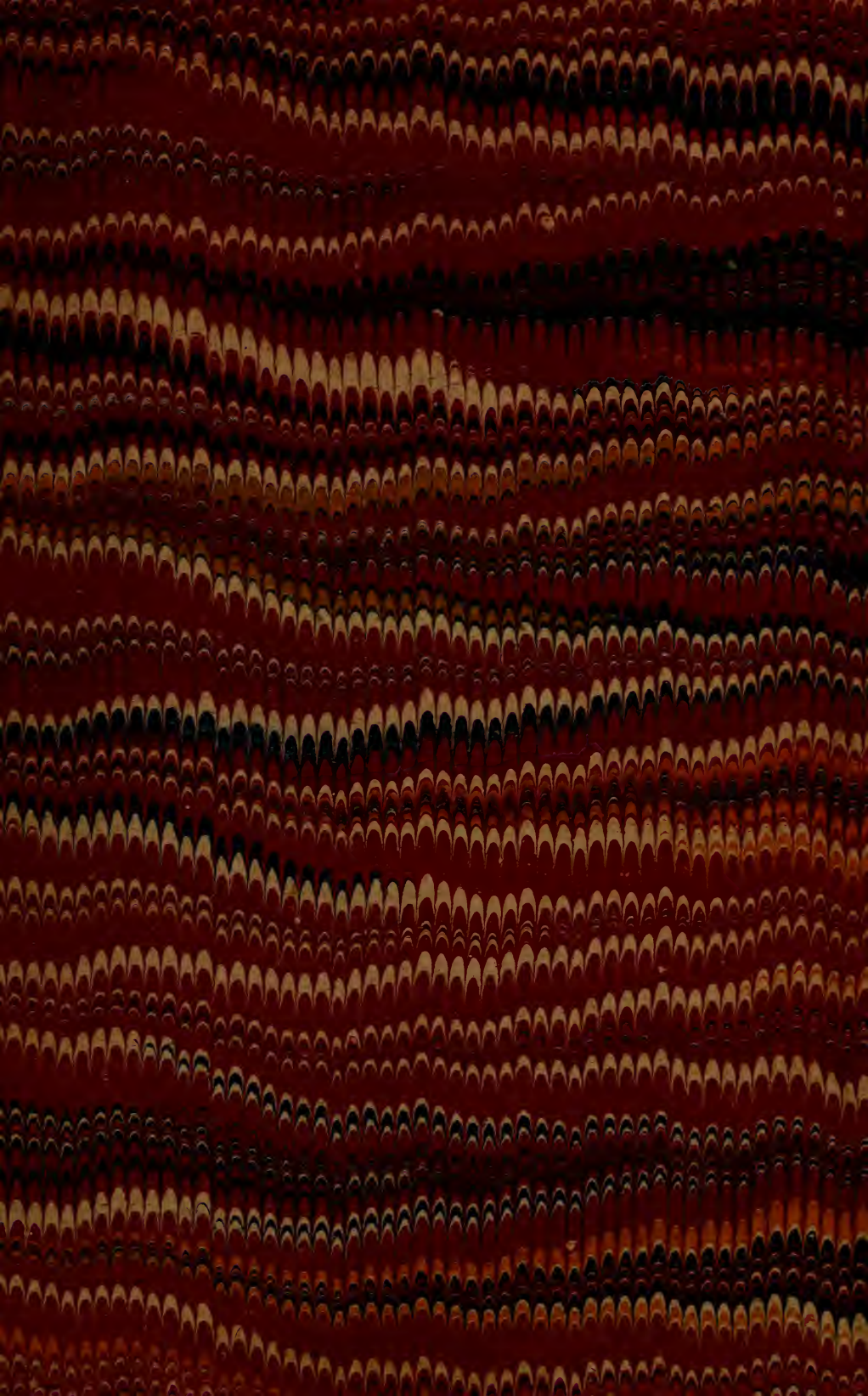


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